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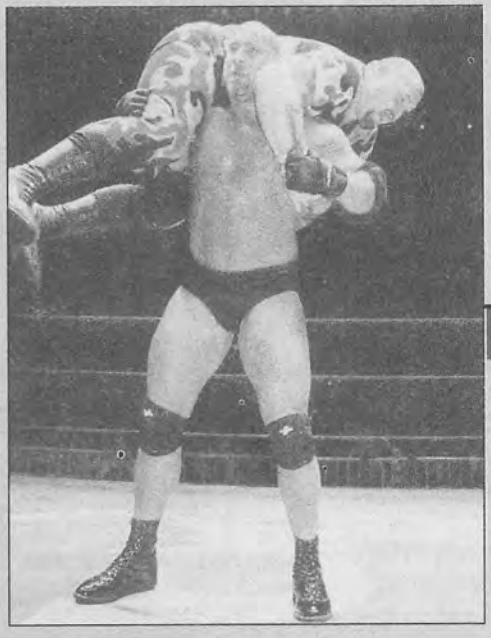

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FROM THE DESK OF...

IF I DIDN'T know that Eric Bischoff's hair had turned prematurely gray when he was in his early-20s, I wouldn't have been surprised if it happened naturally during his six-year run as WCW's head man. Bischoff was in a no-lose situation when he took over the money–losing company in 1993, but by the time he was relieved of his duties this September, he was under attack from his wrestlers, the media, Time Warner, and everybody else who needed to pinpoint the reason the company was losing miserably to its northern rivals.

Right now, I picture him spending quality time with his wife and two children, that anxious feeling in the pit of his stomach finally gone. He probably feels naked without a cell phone attached to his waist, but he has no intention of taking or returning calls.

And why should he? The people calling him now would be offering surface sympathy to a man they probably ripped before he was fired. Most people have little genuine sympathy for Bischoff. Those who know him real well like him, but the rest of the world will remember him best for perhaps the most arrogant statement ever uttered by an executive in any business. I refer, of course, to his infamous "It used to be fun to get the ratings every Tuesday morning, but now when we're kicking their ass in the ratings every week ... it's just not that much fun anymore."

In his mind—and he really believed this at the time—the WWF and Vince McMahon were so inferior that he couldn't even consider them a serious threat. Two years later, at the time he was fired, *Raw's* ratings were averaging twice the ratings for *Nitro*. Pay-per-view buys and arena attendance for house shows were down sharply. Revenue had dropped, and expenditures had not followed. In business, the bottom line is always the bottom line. And that's why presidents of IBM, brilliant men all, have been fired, and baseball Managers of the Year have been shown the door after a couple of losing seasons. Once a standard of excellence has been achieved, the man in charge is responsible for maintaining it—even if it was that same man who established the standard.

I can hear the people at Time Warner now: "Yeah, we know you turned WCW into highly profitable company when men before you were more concerned with outlawing moves from the top rope. We know you overtook the federation the others wouldn't even dare say they were trying to compete with. We know you were right when you convinced us that spending big money on major talent today would result in a huge payoff down the road ...

"BUT WHAT HAVE YOU DONE FOR US LATELY?"

At that point, what would Bischoff be able to say? That he had earned the chance to turn things around? He had the chance and wasn't able to do much with it. That he could compete with the WWF if he was allowed to spice up the show with the WWF's mix of sex, ultraviolence, and language? Time Warner won't bite on that strategy. That, given the circumstances, no one would be able to do any better? Well, Bill Busch, who has served WCW as senior vice president for strategic planning, will get the chance to try.

It's going to take a lot of strategic planning to get this company back in order. Business is down on all fronts, morale is low, and the WWF and even ECW are experiencing new highs in all areas. A few weeks before he was fired, Bischoff actually offered to terminate the contracts of any wrestlers who no longer wanted to be part of the company. Inside sources say Raven, Billy Kidman, and Rey Misterio Jr. took Bischoff up on the offer, at which point only Raven was permitted to depart.

Busch has some hard work ahead of him if he wants to keep headline writers from renaming WCW the Busch League. He has to start allowing younger, more

(Continued on page 53)

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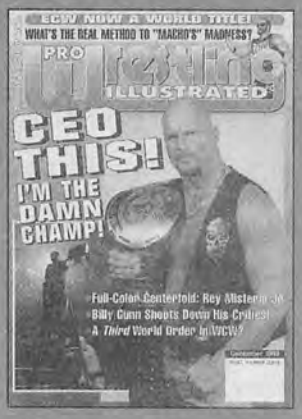
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CEO THIS!
I'M THE DAMN CHAMP!
Full-Color Centerfold: Rey Misterio Jr.
Billy Gunn Shoots Down His Critics!
A Third World Order in WCW?

Steve Austin might have lost his plush corporate office, access to the company Lear jet, and his executive assistant when the McMahons defeated him at King of the Ring, but "Stone Cold" returned the favor by defeating The Undertaker for the WWF World title the following night on *Raw*. In the December '99 issue, the cover story—"CEO This! I'm The Damn Champ!"—examined the situation. Austin's fans and non-fans were not shy about giving us their input.

"Steve Austin doesn't realize who made him the man he is today," wrote Reed Flick of Fort Campbell, Kentucky. "The McMahons turned a boring redneck into a 'Stone-Cold' money-making machine. Austin needs to realize that."

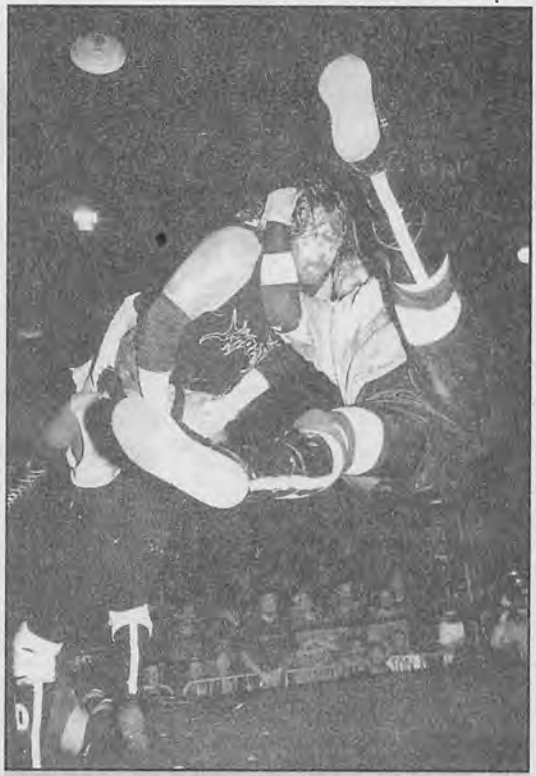
"Vince probably still thinks that he can beat Austin, but he can't," said Fred Dingle, who left a message on the *PWI* Hotline. "He played the McMahons like a fiddle."

"There's one thing that fans seem to forget—Vinnie Mac is the one who signs Austin's checks," e-mailed Ryan Lassiter of West Lawn, Pennsylvania. "If Vince didn't want Austin around, Austin wouldn't be around."

BACK FROM THE DEAD

I'm writing to comment on your article "Special Analysis: Is Tag Team Wrestling Dead?" (August 1999). Well, I have two words for you—no way! What would our lives be like without great teams like The Hardy Boyz, Taka Michinoku and Sho Funaki, X-Pac and Kane, The Acolytes, Public Enemy, Dean Malenko and Chris Benoit, Billy Kidman and Rey Misterio Jr., and The Dudley Boyz. It's not dead. These are talented athletes. Whether these teams are high-flyers or seven-foot giants, they are great performers. Wrestling just would not be the same without them.

ANDREW VANLOON
Owosso, MI



What would our lives be like without tag teams like The Dudley Boyz to help brighten our days? That's what Andrew Vanloon wants to know. Probably a whole lot safer, Andrew, but definitely less exciting.

"HULKAMANIA" PART II

It's good to see *Hulk* Hogan back.

During the 1980s, I'd watch my son, Nate, and daughter, Jessie, wake up bright and early every Saturday morning. They'd put on the local UHF channel and they'd sit, eyes glued to the TV, hoping for a glimpse of the "Hulkster." He wouldn't be on every Saturday, but the days that he did show up, and especially the days that he'd actually wrestle, were like Christmas morning for my kids.

Now my son is 24 and my daughter is 21. The days of waking up to find them planted in front of a wrestling show are long gone. I don't think they follow wrestling anymore, and I kind of lost track of it as well, but somehow we all knew that Hogan was no longer a hero. He had gone bad.

Well, last night my family had a big dinner at my house. My son and daughter were there, and my daughter brought along her boyfriend, a wrestling fan. So after we ate, my daughter's boyfriend convinced us to tune in to *Nitro*. He tried to explain to us what was going on and who was who, and while we laughed at most of the stuff, it was the appearance of Hulk Hogan's son that actually got my family interested again.

When Hogan's son pulled out the old red and yellow outfit, it brought back a bunch of memories. My son and daughter kind of sat up a little bit, and we actually watched until the end of the show. Then, there Hulk Hogan was, in all his glory, trying to resurrect "Hulkamania." From the reaction of the arena crowd, it worked there. And I can say from first-hand experience that it worked in other places as well.

BOB SPRINGTON
Denver, CO

WWF *WRESTLING?*

I have been watching wrestling for about five years now. For the past year, I have watched the WWF go right down the toilet. The fans don't watch the WWF for matches anymore. They watch to see the puppies, GTV, or who "Stone-Cold" is going to flip off. Even the WWF logo has changed. It used to hold prestige and honor. Now it looks like something some third-grader drew. Maybe I don't "get it," but on Monday nights, my TV's staying on WCW, where they at least respect wrestling and what it is.

SHAUN STIRNEMAN
Cuero, TX

FILTHY FAN

I love The Filthy Animals. Billy Kidman, Eddy Guerrero, and Rey Misterio Jr. are great wrestlers who offer a refreshing change of pace from the older guys in WCW who can't seem to get that youth is king. Besides, all three of those guys are so cute! Mean Gene was right when he said that Kidman is a chick magnet. He's good-looking, and the risks he takes, especially that shooting star press, make me like him so much more.

I know they haven't won as many belts as Hulk Hogan, and that they don't have ladies like Savage, but remember, Hogan and Savage were rookies once. They achieved greatness through their hard work—so should The Filthy Animals.

PAULINE LIEBERMAN
Wallingford, PA

KINDRED SOUL

Harry Burkett's "Win, Lose, Or Draw" column in the November 1999 issue moved me deeply. His memories of his grandmother's love for wrestling (and HBK in particular) reminded me of my recently deceased mother and grandfather.

I never really got to know my grandfather, as he died when I was a baby, but he was a serious fan of boxing and wrestling. Granny said that he got so excited she feared he would smash the radio (later the TV) or have a heart attack.

Mom inherited her father's fondness for the combat sports and passed this love to me. We stopped watching boxing when Howard Cosell declared it corrupt, but Mom soon made up for the loss by fixating on Hulk Hogan. Later on, she didn't watch as much wrestling as I did, because the high-flyers and hardcore wrestlers worried her—"Ooh, doesn't that hurt?"—but she still followed the sport and was thrilled when I showed her the WWF Web site. Now, when I watch wrestling or read *PWI*, I remember my Mom, as I'm sure Mr. Burkett remembers his grandmother.

SUZANNE H. GRIMARD
Greenfield, MA

FAIR CRITICISM

Having purchased November's issue to learn about women professionals, I concluded that the article on the women of the WWF ("The Women Of The WWF: There's More To Their Power Than Their Looks") was not as good as it could have been. It seemed to me that someone on your staff may have a problem with a female physique challenging his sense of male pride.

Our recent story on the women of the WWF included some derogatory comments about Nicole Bass, says H.K. Schouten. While that might be true, we're sure Bass can defend herself.

After having some positive things to say about the other women of the WWF, to include Nicole Bass by referring to her as "downright scary" came across as quite disrespectful.

A woman I came to know was often referred to by men as a "six-foot Amazon." She had learned to use fear and an extreme attitude to survive in a male-dominated world. But after some respect and kindness, she allowed me to see beyond her walls of stone to discover a good heart and sense of humor.

It was a special learning experience for me, and something that more men need to be willing to understand.

Also, to see someone like Nicole Bass in a bikini contest against someone like Debra, and to see her totally dominate the ring with a great physique, only to lose to a set of puppies, was rude and insulting to see happen.

Nicole Bass has worked very hard for a very long time to achieve a superior level of development and has earned the right to be treated with a great deal of respect and consideration by all.

H.K. SCHOUTEN
Holley, NY □

10 YEARS AGO IN PWI

The cover of *PWI's* January 1990 issue featured Intercontinental champion The Ultimate Warrior. Warrior had recently blasted his way through Randy Savage, Andre the Giant, and Rick Rude. The only man left to beat was his friend and ally Hulk Hogan. Would Warrior make the World champ his next victim—and would the WWF let him? As things turned out, the answer to both questions was "yes."

Elsewhere in the magazine: Kerry Von Erich suffered a shocking upset at the hands of Taras Bulba and his lethal clawhold ... The Midnight Express were in the middle of their worst slump ever—and they blamed manager Jim Cornette ... Jim Ross discussed the state of the sport and the rapid growth of the NWA in "Press Conference" ... Sid Vicious was featured in the centerfold.

Magazine Availability: Limited.

RINGSIDE

With Will Welsh

AFTER MORE THAN 10 years of fighting the good fight for the fans of WCW, **Sting** betrayed his loyal supporters by attacking **Hulk Hogan** with a baseball bat at Fall Brawl to win his seventh NWA/WCW World title.

"I did what I had to do," Sting said. "I've spilled my blood and guts for this company for more than a decade, and what have I gotten for it? Jack. You people should have seen this coming, though. Good guys wear white, and I've been wearing black for a while now."

Sting's words ring truer than anybody cares to say. He never clearly proved his loyalty to WCW dressed as "The Crow," and he even had a stint as a member of the **New World Order**. Granted, it was as a member of **Kevin Nash's Wolfpac**, but aligning himself with any NWO faction, even one that is said to have good intentions, is a sign that Sting's loyalty lies elsewhere. He's probably been waiting to stab Hogan in the back all along.

What is happening with ECW? The promotion has so many people coming and going that the Federal Aviation Agency is thinking about putting an air traffic control tower on the top of the ECW Arena.

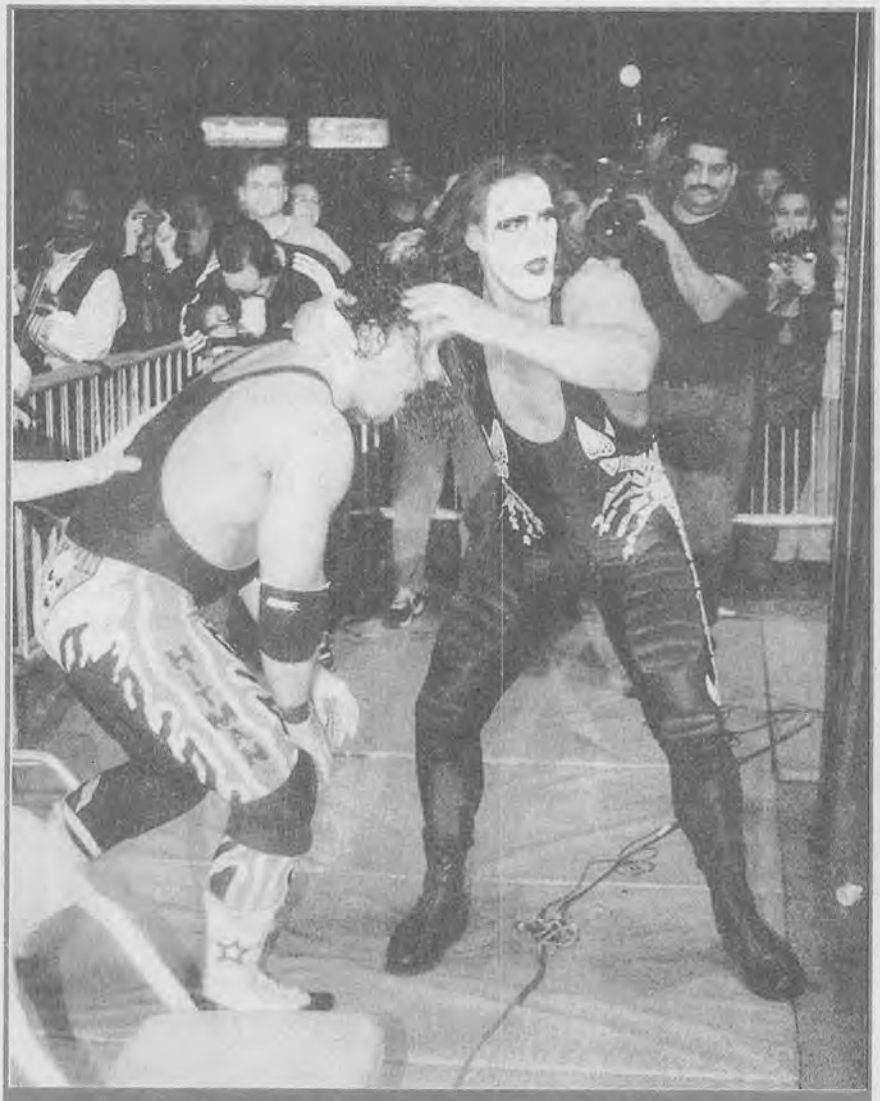
The Dudley Boyz are out. **Raven** is in. **Taz** is out. And rumor has it the revolving door that is known as ECW is far from finished making its rounds.

"I'm going to win **Vince McMahon's** World title whether he likes it or not," Taz said. "If that means I go through **Steve Austin** or **Hunter Hearst Helmsley,** so be it."

At this stage, whether or not Taz wins the WWF title is irrelevant. He has left ECW, and there is no one in the company, not even the newly acquired **Raven**, who can fill his shoes. Taz was an individual ideally suited for ECW, and, yes, ECW was ideally suited for Taz. As for Raven, he really doesn't care about Taz' decision.

"Who cares if Taz leaves," Raven said. "I'm not here to win the World title, so it doesn't make a difference who holds it. Let **Sabu** wear the belt. Let **Masato Tanaka** wear it. I don't care. And despite what it looks like, I'm not even here to win the tag team title. I'm here for **Tommy Dreamer**. I've missed putting him through hell."

It's no secret that **Berlyn** is actually former WCW TV champion **Alex Wright**, but when I tried to get



How long has Sting been harboring thoughts about becoming a bad guy? Apparently, it's been a while. He's never gotten along with Bret Hart, and he joined the NWO to get at Hulk Hogan. A model citizen he's not.

Raven's return to ECW couldn't have come at a more opportune time for the former heavyweight champion. The Dudley Boyz have left for the WWF, Taz is also gone, and Tommy Dreamer is ripe for the picking.

a word with him backstage at a recent *Nitro,* I was shoved away by his horde of bodyguards. His interpreter, **Uda Ludendorff**, stepped in while I was getting manhandled.

"Berlyn wants nothing to do with your American magazines," Ludendorff said. "They are nothing more than propaganda machines for American stars like **Buff Bagwell**. Berlyn only talks to German magazines. Besides, you wouldn't be able to comprehend the true meaning of his words. English is such an ugly language."

She is such a pleasure to talk to.

I haven't seen many tag teams more unusual than the one comprised of **Mankind** and **The Rock**. The fact that they were able to get along for even one match together, let alone hold the WWF World tag team title for eight days, was very surprising. After all, these two guys couldn't be much more different.

The Rock is a blue-chip WWF superstar who rose to prominence because of his natural athletic ability and the hours he spent training under his father, former star **Rocky Johnson**. Mankind is far from a blue-chip superstar. He rose to prominence by wrestling in Japanese death matches, not by learning the science of mat wrestling. The Rock is a perfect fit for the cover of *GQ*. Mankind would settle for the cover of *Cat Fancy*. They are undeniably world's apart, unless you ask Mankind, that is.

"The Rock and I are best friends," Mankind said. "We do all the things best friends do. We go to amusement parks together; we hang out at bars and look at all the pretty ladies together. Rock has even said that he's taking me clothes shopping at a place called 'Our Many.' I can't wait!"

I think The Rock meant "Armani," Mick. Armani.

Why **Mark Henry** turned his back on his best friend, **D-Lo Brown**, remains a mystery to most people, but according to D-Lo, it shouldn't be too hard to figure out.

"Look who **Jeff Jarrett** has walking to ringside with him, man," Brown said. "We all know that Mark can't stop thinking about puppies. Just look at him when he's in the ring. He's not concentrating on wrestling. If there's a female at ringside, she's got his attention, and if there's not, you can bet that Mark is scannin' the crowd looking for another hoochie that he can hook up with. The whole 'Sexual Chocolate' thing has gone to his head."

Draven has defeated **Dr. Heresy** to become the new Unified Championship Wrestling champion ... The WWF is scheduled to open its restaurant/concert arena/nightclub on Times Square in New York City this month ... Been wondering where **Ahmed Johnson** has been since he departed from the WWF? So have we. We sent intrepid reporter **Matt Brock** on a search for the former WWF star. Shortly after coming down with a nasty case of Montezuma's Revenge (if you don't know, don't ask), Brock found Johnson wrestling in Mexico as **The Black Superman**. After Brock spent a few siestas down south of the border, you'll be happy to know that he returned home safely. His first purchase after the trip: a water filter.

Colorado Kid has lost his NWA North American title. **Big Bully Douglas** is the new champion, and he doesn't plan on losing the belt anytime soon.

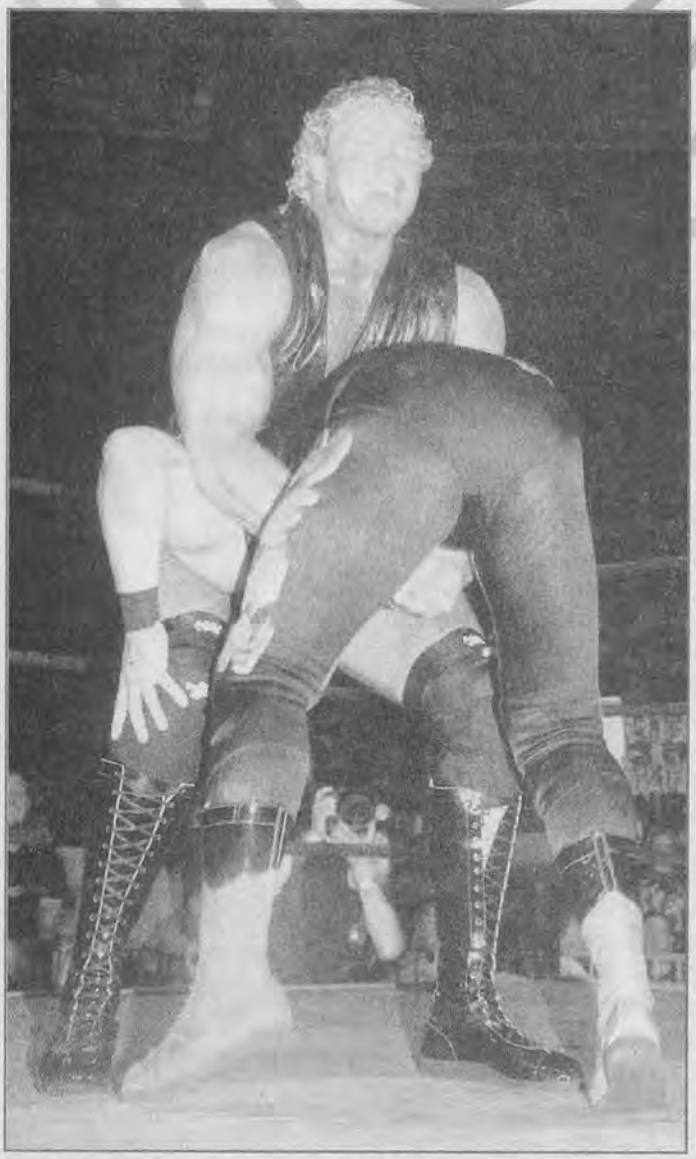
"You know what," said Douglas, "I beat Colorado fair and square. I'm happy that I ruined his chance to go to the WWF as a champion. He thought he was going to go to Stamford as the NWA North American champion, but I've busted those

(Continued on page 52)

D-Lo Brown was well on his way to a successful Intercontinental title defense against Jeff Jarrett at SummerSlam, but he never expected his best friend, Mark Henry, to attack him from behind. Brown says Henry's priorities are mixed up.

in focus

By Dave Lenker



Looks like Sid Vicious is about to add to that phenomenal winning streak of his with this power bomb. It's a very unusual winning streak in that it has a few losses in the middle of it.

MATH PROBLEMS

It pains me to rip Sid Vicious in this column. It really does. He's been a favorite target of so many *PWI* columnists over the years. I just can't start taking shots at the big guy. I can't and I won't.

Ah, I just have to ...

This streak thing is utterly ridiculous. The fact that WCW promotes it is even more ridiculous.

First of all, for him to have amassed 50-plus wins by mid-August would have required him to have wrestled just about every night since his arrival in WCW on June 13. That's impossible given that WCW does not run a show every night.

However, let me make this much more important point perfectly clear: Sid Vicious is not undefeated since returning to WCW. Not even close. A quick scan of our records reveals losses to Sting on July 2 in Shreveport, Louisiana, on July 3 in Monroe, Louisiana, on August 7 in Tucson, Arizona, on August 20 in San Francisco, and on August 22 in Los Angeles. Then there was his and Rick Steiner's loss to Sting and Bill Goldberg in a tag team match on August 21 in Reno, Nevada, and his *stunning* defeat at the hands of Booker T on August 4 in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

Apparently Sid's matches on house shows are a lot like preseason NFL games. They can be entertaining to watch, but the final outcomes are unimportant since they don't really count in the standings. But, hey, saying a guy hasn't lost since he showed up in your federation sounds a lot better than saying he has won 79.6 or 82.1 or 85.8 percent of his matches.

I want to see Sid vs. Goldberg as much as anyone, but to say he has a streak that will soon rival Goldberg's is insulting to everyone, especially those fans in Monroe, Louisiana, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, Reno, Nevada, and so forth. They paid good money to see top WCW matches and are now essentially being asked to forget they saw them when they watch WCW on TV.

I understand that in the last few years, the Big Two have put most of their emphasis on pay-per-views and TV shows, but shouldn't they show a little more respect to the people who pack the arenas even when the cameras aren't around? I didn't expect the WWF to acknowledge on TV that Steve Austin and Hunter Hearst Helmsley wrestled each other at least a half-dozen times in the weeks leading up to SummerSlam, or for WCW to remind us that Goldberg had already beaten The Giant a dozen or so times before they clashed on TV last year, but this streak thing has just been laughable.

I can't wait for the inevitable Bret Hart-Hulk Hogan pay-per-view match. In case you missed it, Hogan

wrestled the "Hitman" in three WCW World title bouts on house shows in August. All three matches were declared no-contests due to extensive outside interference. Wanna bet their PPV match is billed as the first-ever match between the two?

DUDLEYS: NEXT PE?

Four years ago, the result of the dark match at the WWF's Survivor Series looked very significant to me. World tag team champions The Smokin' Gunns defeated Public Enemy.

Not only was the WWF interested in this superstar tag team that had dominated ECW for several years, but it gave Johnny Grunge and Rocco Rock a title match in their first match out.

I figured this would mark the beginning of a nice run in the WWF for PE. Turns out some people in WCW were watching PE, too, and Grunge and Rock never did agree to a deal with the WWF. They went and signed with WCW. So I expected them to become big stars there.

What happened?

Well, for one, the hardcore style PE used in ECW quickly became passe, as so many of the superstars in the WWF and WCW showed they could be hardcore, too. Their routine of putting opponents through tables no longer seemed like something special. Think about it: The Rock was choke-slammed through a broadcasters' table at the August 30 *Raw* and came back to win the WWF World tag team title about 90 minutes later.

The fact that Rocco Rock and Johnny Grunge don't have a lot to offer in the way of scientific skills and weren't given much interview time in WCW hurt them, too. Save for one eight-day reign as WCW tag team champs, PE flopped big time. They eventually returned to ECW ... to an underwhelming response from fans. Then they jumped to the WWF ... where they weren't well-received by anyone and were quickly released. Then they went back to WCW ... and have apparently left again.

I couldn't help but think about the flop of PE when I heard The Dudley Boyz were going to the WWF. I'm hoping Buh Buh Ray and D-Von fare better in the Big Two, but I'm not sure they will.

Like PE, the Dudleys are vicious brawlers who get more dangerous as matches get more extreme. Are those skills good enough to take them far in the WWF against The Acolytes, Christian and Edge, The Hardy Boyz, and makeshift superstar teams like The Rock and Mankind and The Undertaker and "Big Show" Paul Wight?

What might also hurt the Dudleys is that one thing they became known for in ECW is giving intense and very profane interviews. You might hear quite a bit of profanity on WWF TV these days, but superstars like Steve Austin, The Rock, Hunter Hearst Helmsley, and Billy Gunn are given a lot more leeway than new tag teams. And don't expect Buh Buh Ray to be allowed to get in fans' faces in the WWF the way he was in ECW.

An even more important point to note—and I wonder if the Dudleys thought about this before signing—is that the WWF has only occasionally put a huge marketing push into a tag team in recent years. In fact, the only two wrestlers I can remember becoming superstars as a team in the last few years are "Road Dogg" Jesse James and Billy Gunn, and they're not even together anymore.

Could the Dudleys make it big as singles stars? They'd have a hard time doing it in the WWF.

Maybe what the Dudleys said on ECW TV recently is true, and they're interested mainly in the huge sums of money Vince McMahon could pay them, but I have a feeling they're going to do everything they can to make themselves stars in the WWF.

Will the WWF do the same? □

The Dudley Boyz have arrived in the WWF. It'll be a while before we figure out whether they can develop into an elite team there ... or if they're going to be another Public Enemy.

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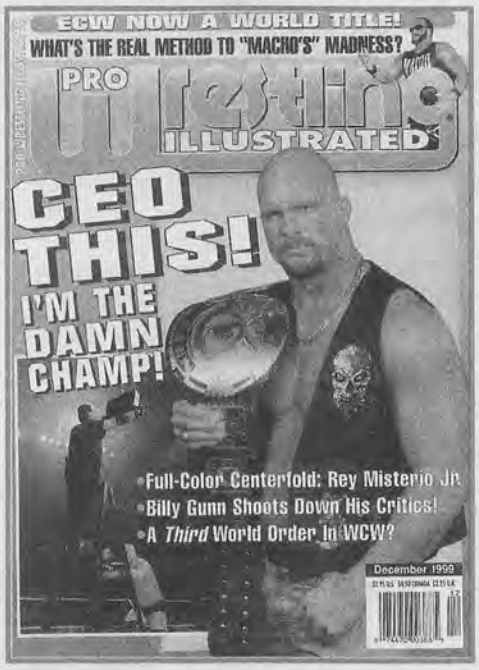

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off the top rope

by Brandi Mankiewicz

If you wish to contribute to Brandi's mailbag, send your letters to:

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(Editor's note: The opinions expressed in this column are those of the letter writers and Brandi Mankiewicz herself. They do not necessarily reflect the editorial views of this magazine.)

I GUESS I have to take the good with the bad when it comes to WWF television. A rulebreaker rules the WWF, as "Triple-H" deservedly holds the gold. That's good. Mr. McMahon has been banished from WWF TV. That's bad. Steve Austin hasn't been seen on WWF TV much, since he's nursing another boo-boo. That's good. Test somehow brainwashed Stephanie McMahon into agreeing to marry him. That's bad for her and for the rest of the McMahon family.

Meanwhile, in WCW, the "Hulkster" is back to wearing the red and yellow. That's a color scheme that makes me nauseous. Must have made Sting nauseous, too, because you saw what he did at Fall Brawl.

As for your Queen, you should know by now that I look good in all colors. In fact, I look good all the time. For I am your champion.

Dearest Magnificent Brandi:

Obviously, you are the only intelligent life form who writes at *PWI*, so I'm asking for your opinion. Why do most of these losers out here believe that people like Stink (Sting), Lex Loser (Luger), Stain Douglas (Shane Douglas), The Ultimate Washout (Warrior), and most of the bums in the WWF are good wrestlers? I think they are a bunch of boring punks who couldn't wipe tobacco off the boots of real men like Stan Hansen and Terry Funk. Thanks for a moment of your time.

CHAUNCEY MARSHALL
shakedown51@hotmail.com

Chauncey:

With a first name like that, I wouldn't necessarily be mocking other monikers. There will never be another Stan Hansen or another Terry Funk. Frankly, I don't want to see that. They are reminders of a bygone era when wrestlers didn't have catch phrases and entrance music replete with video accompaniment. Stain and Washout play to the crowd. They allow the fans to live out fantasies about how they could be a famous wrestler's friend. It's a fallacy and a fraud perpetrated week after week. Guys such as Hansen and Funk would have nothing to do with that.

Dear Brandi:

I think that Buff Bagwell and Sting are the best wrestlers in this sport today. But please, wrestlers like "The Cat" are total pathetic. Now I am only 12, and I know more about wrestling than I did 12 months ago. Thank you for listening to me.

JOSH WILES
seagull76@hotmail.com

Josh:

Because you are a preteen, I'll forgive your youthful indiscretion for now. "The Cat" does not court fan favor or succumb to popular opinion. Fans jeer him and call him boring. Meanwhile, Sting and Bagwell are supposed to represent excitement and flamboyance? Please. They can't sing. They can't dance. And they are not three-time world karate champions. Miller brings an element of class to each and every *Nitro* broadcast. Pathetic? Somebody call this little boy's mama.

Dear Queen Brandi,

With all the hacks in *PWI*, it's nice

I was all set to rip one of my minions for saying something good about Sting, but then I saw what happened at Fall Brawl. Now I'm *almost* ready to say something complimentary about him.

Maybe the WWF really doesn't need to be saved, but Chris Jericho says it does, and I'm interested in seeing exactly what he has planned. I like what he has done to Ken Shamrock so far.

to see a refreshing change when I read your work. But on to business. "Triple-H" vs. Kevin Nash—who do you think would prevail? I'll grant that Nash is taller and has the power bomb, but with Helmsley using sledgehammers and pedigrees these days, I think he might be able to tumble the giant called Nash. What's our champion's call of the match?

JONATHAN SEAGULL
jonathanseagull@rocketmail.com

Jonathan:

I'll take "Triple-H." I was once a diehard devotee of "Big Sexy," but his return to rulebreaking after an embarrassing fan favorite stint was a mere flirtation. Alas, Kev cannot tolerate hearing anything but shrieks of acceptance from the moronic masses. "Triple-H," on the other hand, has forsaken any need for acceptance. He attacks anyone and everyone. His goal is to destroy and conquer. He has the heart of a champion and more of a will to win. That's why he's the WWF champion, and Nash is off on the Island of Misfit Wrestlers Who Lost Retirement Matches.

Hey, Brandi:

Well, I just wanted to talk to you about Chris Jericho. I love him. In my mind, he is the next or new generation of the WWF. The only thing that I don't like about him is that he is hanging out with Howard Finkel. Other than that, I think he is a great wrestler and is very funny. What do you think?

KEVIN PIAZZA
shawnm88@hotmail.com

Kevin:

What Chris Jericho represents to the WWF is more than just a superstar for the next millennium. He is the savior the WWF needs. He will take the WWF from the depths of its depravity and lead it in a new direction. Finally, matches will take place among people of the same sex, and in the ring, of all places. Go figure. The amoral shark is out of control, feeding off the flesh of our standards. Jericho will reel it in. How's that for metaphor and imagery?

Brandi:

Perhaps it is time for WCW to consider the resurrection of a six-man tag division, complete with title belts. I am reminded of great teams such as The Rock 'n' Roll Express and Midnight Express. Now, with great new tandems like The Triad and The Revolution rocking the ring every Monday night with superior six-man action, I believe that a six-man tag division would be a very exciting one.

TRAVIS PERSUN
HlsmFamEnt@aol.com

Travis:

Zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz. **Oh, I'm sorry. You were saying? Oh, yes, the six-man tag team division. What a great idea. Seems to me that the last champions were Tommy Rich, Mike Rotundo, and somebody else back in the early-'90s. Yep, they lit up that competitive division. I needed years of therapy to forget about six-man tag team champions, and now you bring this up again. Don't kid yourself. Supreme teams like The Triad are created to up the ante in standard tag team matches. They make regular tag team competition more interesting. The six-man title. Yeah, like WCW really needs another title.** □

There was time (not too long ago, I might add) when I would have laughed at anyone who suggested "Triple-H" could beat someone like Kevin Nash. Now I know he could beat "Big Sexy."

KREW-CUTS

By Frank Krewda

A case for Shane. He may be in their good graces now, but before long the WWF fans will boo **Shane McMahon** again. Why? Because he's the owner's son, or because he's an arrogant rich kid? Neither. People will boo Shane McMahon because he's good. In fact, Shane may be the best young wrestler in the WWF—and that's why the fans will always boo him.

Compare Shane to another fortunate son—**David Flair**. Flair, the son of a former WCW president, was handed the U.S. title without having defeated anyone, and given the lovely **Torrie Wilson** as an arm trophy. Of course, WCW fans vilified Flair for these things, but he was tolerated because everybody knew David's career was a complete sham. When he finally faced a real opponent, **Chris Benoit**, Flair was exposed and thoroughly embarrassed in the ring.

Unlike Flair, Shane doesn't rely on Vince's help once he's in the ring, and he seldom loses. When he does lose, he's rarely humiliated. In "smart" parlance, Shane rarely "gets his receipt." Why not? Because Shane is simply a better athlete than many of the men with whom he climbs into the ring—and that just drives the WWF fans nuts.

Wrestling fans would be more tolerant of Shane McMahon if he acted like a bumbling lackey. Instead, Shane has shown prowess in the ring, and the fans hate him for it.

Sure, he's snotty, spoiled, vindictive, and vain. But that shouldn't matter in this day and age. I mean, wrestling fans no longer care about good guys and bad guys, do they?

The next time Shane wrestles, forget about **Vince**, **Stephanie**, **Test**, and **The Mean Street Posse** and concentrate on what he's doing in the ring. You might actually find yourself applauding when the match is over.

To the bitter end. I'm not an ECW apologist, but it's no secret that I prefer extreme wrestling to the so-called Big Two. However, one line from ECW I will no longer swallow is the "we have such a great locker room" spiel. ECW's wrestlers may be a hard working bunch, but they can't all be happy, otherwise nobody would leave.

In two years, I've watched so many big name wrestlers leave ECW for WCW and the WWF. When given the option of more money vs. "a great locker room," wrestler after wrestler took the money. The list of departed superstars is too long to list and we know who they are, but the recent losses of **Taz** and **The Dudley Boyz** will hurt the most.

Paul Heyman insists that every time a wrestler leaves, it creates an opportunity for someone else to rise, but these guys aren't your standard defectors. ECW lost its World heavyweight and World tag team champs just weeks after the company signed a national TV contract with TNN. That these dominant champs didn't want to wait and be part of the company's expected growth speaks volumes.

Every wrestler has the right to address his or her financial security, and now, with several years in the business, Taz, Buh Buh Ray, and D-Von should, too—if not for themselves than for their families. I just hope they realize that the success they had in ECW will not necessarily be duplicated in the WWF.

It has nothing to do with talent. Taz and The Dudleys succeeded in ECW because they were at home there. They were the fabric of the promotion. In the WWF, they must follow rules, take orders, battle cliques, deal with the McMahons. They are outsiders, strangers in a strange land, where everyone wants to test their hardcore reputations.

Most wrestlers who decried the trappings of success have ended up in WCW or the WWF making more money than they did in ECW, and now that the hardest of the hardcore have grabbed the brass ring, all that talk about ECW's "great locker room" sounds more like a company line every time I hear it.

Thumbs down. I get a kick out of

What fate awaits The Dudleys and Taz in the WWF? Their defection to the WWF weeks after ECW went national belies all those stories about ECW's tight-knit locker room.

these American fans who think Japanese wrestlers can do no wrong. You know the kind of people I'm talking about. The kind who boo a **Steiner**-line, but cheer **Stan Hansen's** lariat just because he's been wrestling in Japan. These are the same fans who criticize **Hulk Hogan** for using his political sway to keep the WCW World title belt around his waist.

A similar offense took place in the Orient on August 25, when All-Japan President and Triple Crown champion **Mitsuharu Misawa** took the liberty of booking himself and **Yoshinari Ogawa** in a tag team title match against All-Japan All-Asian, All-Japan International, and Pacific Wrestling Federation tag team champions **Takao Omori** and **Yoshihiro Takayama**. Misawa pinned Omori at 23:02 to win the titles, raising his total of belts to six—three from the Triple Crown and one each from the three tag team classes. That's six belts. At one time. Around the *president's* waist. Yet no one has scolded Misawa for using his office to collect these belts.

There's a gross double-standard being set here. Apparently, if Hogan (or any American) flexes his muscle, it's wrong; if Misawa does it, it's brilliant matchmaking. For God's sake, people, if you're going to create a double-standard, at least do it in favor of the home team.

The fact is, whether Hogan can touch Misawa in the ring—and he probably can't—what Misawa did on August 25 was just as wrong as what Hogan has done, if not more so. Remember, Hogan holds no office in WCW; Misawa is the president of All-Japan. Hogan wields influence; Misawa wields power, which in this case was clearly abused.

Thumbs down to Misawa, and two thumbs down to the fans who've turned a blind eye to this stunt.

Buzz cuts. I think it's more than just a coincidence that **Dawn Marie**, **Francine**, **Jazz**, and **Angelica** (**Danny Doring's** valet) have kept their clothes on since ECW's deal with TNN was signed ... Message to WCW: Letting **Sid Vicious** break up matches between **Juventud Guerrera** and **Billy Kidman** so he can power-bomb talented wrestlers into oblivion is about as entertaining as those **Jay Leno** skits **Eric Bischoff** tried last year ... Keep an eye on **Jeff Hardy's** (the blond) aerial exploits the next time you see **The New Brood** wrestle. Nobody defies death, or at least serious injury, more times in any given match ... The good news: Talks between **Paul Heyman** and **The Warrior** haven't broken down yet. The bad news: Talks between Paul Heyman and The Warrior haven't started yet because Heyman has been unable to decipher a nine-page Internet posting in which the The Warrior is supposed to have expressed an interest in coming to ECW. "I can't even figure out what it is he wants," said Heyman ... Thin is apparently in again, as **Bam Bam Bigelow**, **Mr. Hughes**, and **The Blue Meanie** have all shed some excess weight and look great. Hughes has lost over 100 pounds, Bigelow has dropped 80, and as for the Meanie—no one knows how much weight he's lost, but he currently looks like the younger brother of his previous self ... **The West Texas Rednecks** have been whittled down to a pair of **Windhams**, as **Curt Hennig** and **Bobby Duncum Jr.** will both be undergoing knee surgery ... I'm kind of disappointed in **Mankind** for using a spinoff of **The Rock's** phraseology during his own promos. I thought **Mick Foley** was more creative than that ... I'd like to see the WWF moron who cooked up the Pepper storyline between **Big Bossman** and **Al Snow** stripped naked, stuffed with Alpo, then methodically gnawed by two dozen rabid Chihuahuas. Hey, don't forget to call the *PWI Hotline* Monday through Friday and after pay-per-views to hear all the news as soon as it happens! □

All-Japan President Mitsuharu Misawa has managed to put six federation title belts around his waist without criticism. Imagine the outcry if Hulk Hogan tried a move like that.

THINK YOU'RE TOUGH?

Prove it, punk!

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2) Send it with $1 for each opponent to: **IWA CHALLENGE**
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3) See if your wrestler wins a *CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING BELT* in the IWA's exclusive "Rookie Brawl."

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This is not a computer game or on-line game. After you prove yourself against these ten guys, you'll face wrestlers created by IWA players from all over the world!

WEAR-DOWN HOLDS

1. Airplane spin
2. Armbar
3. Armdrag
4. Armlock
5. Arm stretch
6. Arm whip
7. Asian spike
8. Bear hug
9. Biting
10. Body slam
11. Body tackle
12. Chicken wing
13. Choke
14. Claw
15. Clothesline
16. Cross body block
17. Double axehandle
18. Drop kick
19. Eagle split
20. Elbow smash
21. Eye gouge
22. Face rake
23. Fireman's carry ram
24. Flying body press
25. Flying clothesline
26. Flying drop kick
27. Flying elbow drop
28. Flying head butt
29. Flying mare
30. Forearm smash
31. Foreign object
32. Full nelson
33. Giant swing
34. Grapevine
35. Hair pulling
36. Hammerlock
37. Head lock
38. Head stomp
39. Heart punch
40. Hip roll
41. Irish whip
42. Knee drop
43. Leglock
44. Manager interference
45. Monkey flip
46. Overhead toss
47. Pole ram
48. Reverse chinlock
49. Rolling scissors
50. Rope burn
51. Savate kick
52. Scissors grip
53. Shoulder breaker
54. Slingshot
55. Snap mare
56. Step-over toe hold
57. Suplex
58. Surfboard
59. Turnbuckle smash
60. Wristlock

SET-UP HOLDS

61. Abdominal stretch
62. Atomic drop
63. Avalanche
64. Backbreaker
65. Backroll press
66. Belly to belly
67. Big splash
68. Boston crab
69. Brain buster
70. Bulldog
71. Camel clutch
72. Cobra clutch
73. Cradle
74. Crucifix
75. DDT
76. Figure four
77. Flying leg drop
78. Gourd buster
79. Indian death lock
80. Neckbreaker
81. Piledriver
82. Power bomb
83. Power slam
84. Russian sickle
85. Sleeper
86. Slingshot suplex
87. Small package
88. Spine buster
89. Sunset flip
90. Superplex

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❑ *1. Big Ben*

❑ *2. Ace Stevens*

❑ *3. Jaeger van Dorn*

❑ *4. Bodybag Jones*

❑ *5. Wildfire Johnny Rage*

❑ *6. Eric Darkstrom*

❑ *7. Nook the Secret Weapon*

❑ *8. Derek Craven*

❑ *9. El Diablo Sanchez*

❑ *10. Tygar Singh*

YOUR NAME (PRINT NEATLY)

STREET ADDRESS

CITY, STATE, ZIP

WRESTLER'S NAME (DO NOT USE ANY REAL PRO WRESTLER NAMES)

Wear-Down Holds: Choose 10 of the holds at the left numbered 1-60. Only use a hold once.

1_____ 2_____ 3_____ 4_____ 5_____

6_____ 7_____ 8_____ 9_____ 10_____

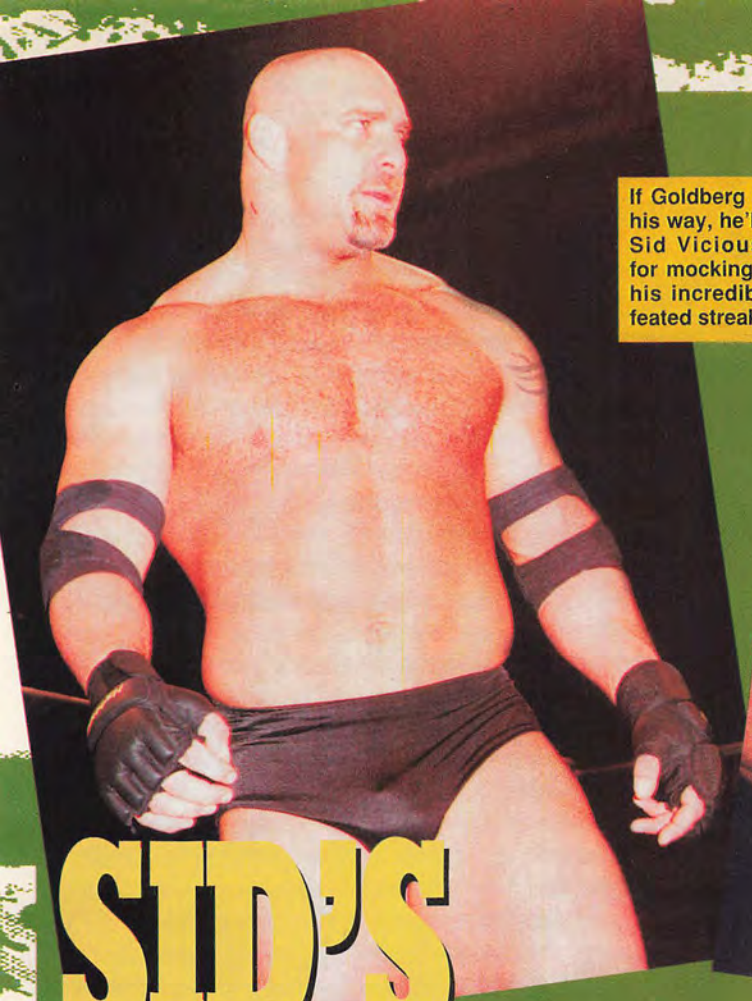
Set-Up Holds: Choose 5 of the holds at the left numbered 61-90. Only use a hold once.

1_____ 2_____ 3_____ 4_____ 5_____

Finishing Hold: Create your own custom final maneuver or choose a hold from our list.

_____

Opponents: Check the box below each wrestler you wish to challenge.



If Goldberg (left) has his way, he'll destroy Sid Vicious (right) for mocking him and his incredible undefeated streak.

SID'S SUICIDE MISSION!

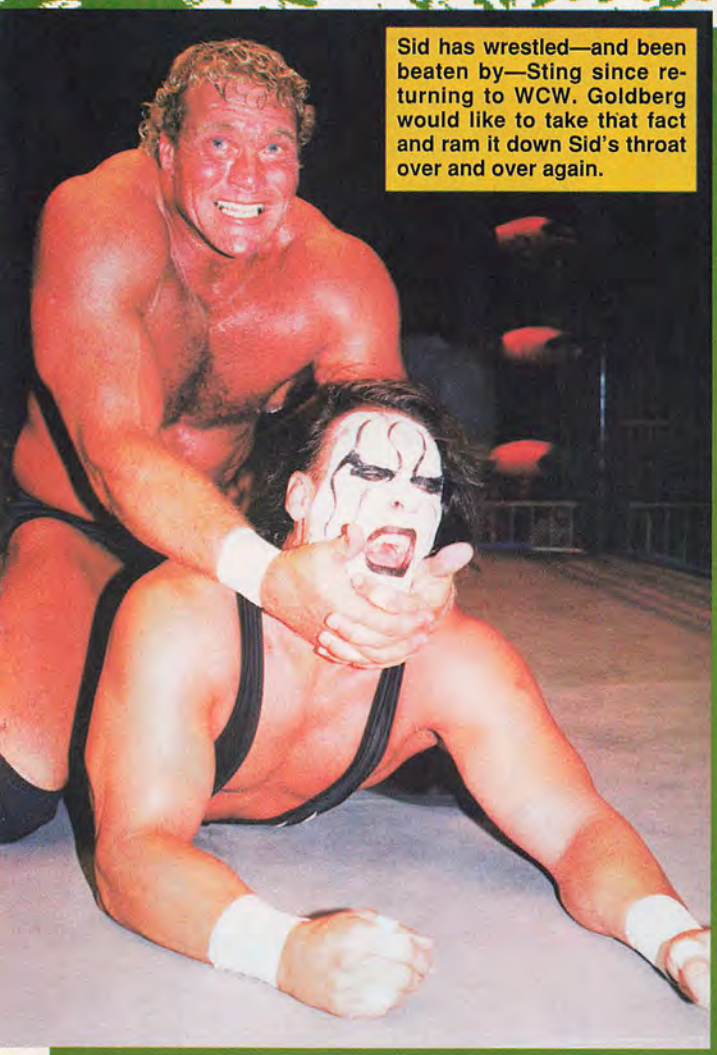
Goldberg Is Not The Man To Humiliate!

Sid Vicious is trying to embarrass Bill Goldberg by adopting his "Millennium Man" persona and mocking his undefeated streak. As Vicious piles up innocent casualties, Goldberg gets angrier by the day ... and millennium mayhem is approaching

By Harry Burkett

SID VICIOUS IS having a big laugh at Bill Goldberg's expense. If that sentence has a strange ring to it, there's a very good reason. Few individuals have laughed at Goldberg and gotten away with it.

Everyone has seen Sid's publicity stunts. As he did during his stint in ECW, Vicious is



Sid has wrestled—and been beaten by—Sting since returning to WCW. Goldberg would like to take that fact and ram it down Sid's throat over and over again.

playing his favorite game: finding ways to wreak havoc without actually wrestling much. He walks to the ring while matches are in progress (preferably the opening bouts) and power-bombs two hapless wrestlers. During tag team matches, he power-bombs four.

WCW isn't in a hurry to stop him, because matches pitting Dave Taylor against Prince Iaukea and Public Enemy against Disorderly Conduct are exciting all of a sudden. Bouts of this caliber are very tempting situations for Vicious. Mid-card meat feeds Sid's need for destruction ... and attention.

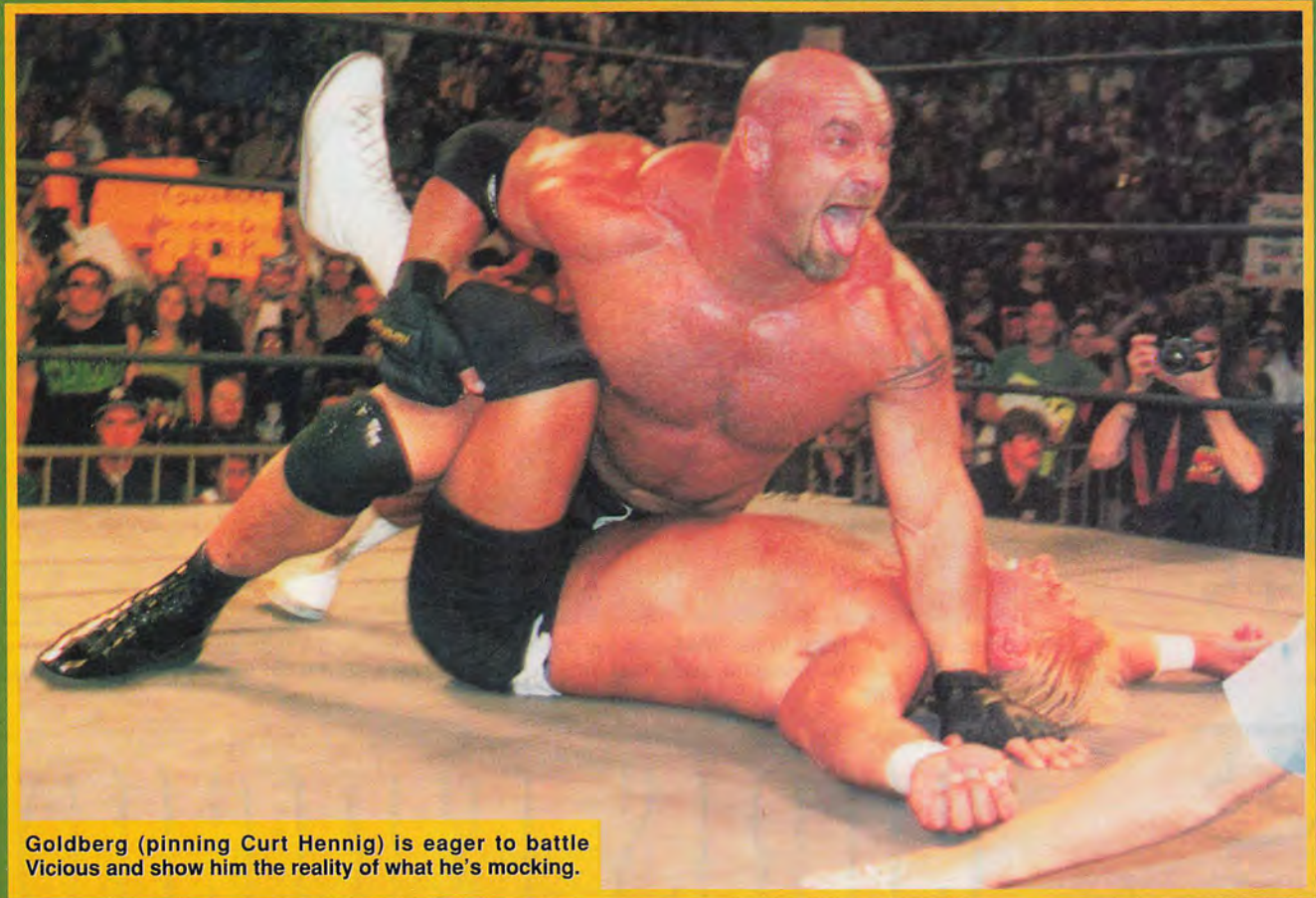
Once Vicious destroys his victims, a stooge—usually Charles Robinson—holds a sign with Sid's supposed win-loss record. It is by no means an official record; it's a body count. Not only that, it's a direct mockery of Goldberg's heralded undefeated streak.

"Goldberg can't stand the fact that I'm making him look like an absolute idiot!" screamed Vicious. "People used to stand on their feet when Goldberg came out with the pyrotechnics and all that junk! They don't stand for Goldberg anymore. They stand for Sid Vicious! They realize that I am the 'Millennium Man' and the ..."

Vicious stopped, shut his eyes, and smiled broadly. He nodded his head up and down as if soaking in nonexistent applause. For a moment, he was lost in self-perpetuated glory.

His smile vanished as his eyes opened wide.

At press time, Vicious (wrestling Sting) was claiming he had about 75 wins in WCW. He hasn't even wrestled 75 times! Actually, he prefers interfering in bouts to actually wrestling in them.



Goldberg (pinning Curt Hennig) is eager to battle Vicious and show him the reality of what he's mocking.

"Before the year 2000, I will be standing over Goldberg's dismembered body, basking in the people's appreciation as they chant, 'Sid! Sid! Sid!'"

Vicious also enjoys the fact that he can mock Goldberg in word and deed without reprisal. To some, it appears Goldberg might be intimidated. Doesn't Vicious deserve a spear and a jackhammer more than anyone?

"Nobody realizes how much I'd like to go out there and shove that microphone down his throat!" seethed Goldberg. "How long has Sid been in this sport? Ten years? More? It just shows you how pathetic he really is. After a decade in wrestling, he obviously doesn't have a reputation of his own. That's why he's trying to steal mine."

Initially, Goldberg gives the impression that his cooler head prevails, and that's the reason why he doesn't attack Vicious. Eyewitnesses insist that isn't the case. All that protects Vicious from Goldberg is the entire WCW security staff, which is on stand-by whenever Sid is in the ring.

When pressed, Goldberg admitted this was true. "If I come out of my dressing room while Sid is out there, I have 15 guys freakin' out with

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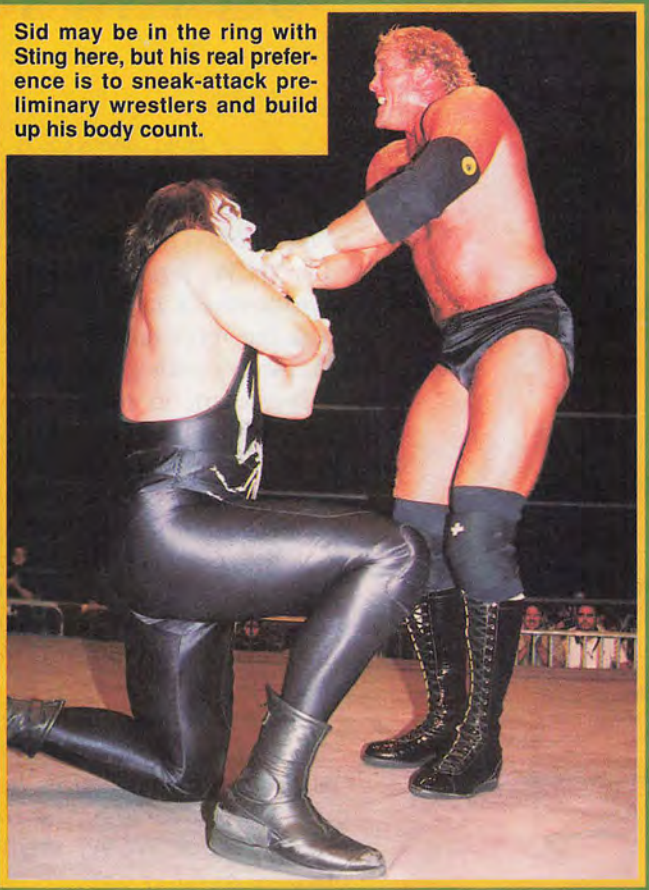


Sid may be in the ring with Sting here, but his real preference is to sneak-attack preliminary wrestlers and build up his body count.

press conference...

Chris Jericho's debut in the WWF was heralded like none other in the federation's history. It was a bold, brash, and extravagant debut that definitely befit a savior. But what exactly is Jericho saving the WWF from?

CHRIS JERICHO

WHAT MAKES A superstar in the world of professional wrestling? Is it the man, is it the organization behind the man, or is it a combination of both?

More often than not, it's the combination. Case in point: Chris Jericho.

In WCW, Jericho had the makings of a superstar: the looks, the skills, and most importantly, a large following of Jerichoholics who thought his segments on ***Nitro*** *were the most entertaining on the program. They eagerly awaited his ascension to main-event status, but for various reasons (different people will give you different reasons), Jericho never made it to the main event.*

Yet he never gave up on his pursuit of wrestling superstardom. He knew that if given the right opportunity, he could become one of the sport's major players. All he needed was someone to believe in him, someone who could tap into his potential. So, when his contract with WCW expired, he packed his bags and headed to Stamford, Connecticut—to the WWF.

Vince McMahon and the rest of the WWF creative team have tapped into Jericho's potential like a keg in a German beer hall. Virtually overnight, the WWF star-making machine transformed Chris Jericho from WCW mid-carder to WWF superstar.

Talent plus promotion equals greatness.

Associate Editor Will Welsh had an extensive conversation with the WWF's "Millennium Man" after he signed his WWF contract, but before he appeared on WWF TV for the first time. In this exclusive interview, Jericho speaks very frankly about WCW, the WWF, and why he hopes ECW beats them both to become number one.

WILL WELSH: What are your thoughts upon signing with the WWF?

CHRIS JERICHO: Well, it's been a long time coming, and it's just something that I really felt I needed to do to further my career. I had a really good time in WCW, but I feel that I reached as far as I could go there at this point in time. Not to say that in one year or two years that WCW wouldn't be the best place for me, but right now, I don't feel that it is the best place for me. I feel the World Wrestling Federation is, and I'm looking forward to getting started there and to get a chance to see what the differences in the companies are, because I've noticed a few big differences already.

> **"I love WCW. I still claim it has the best talent in the world. WCW's roster destroys the WWF's roster. They just don't know how to use the guys to the top of their potential."**

WELSH: What are biggest differences you have noticed so far?

JERICHO: Ah, just in the organization and in the overall projections for the future. The preparing—it seems like it's very much more of a business. I feel more like a part of a business, like an investment in the future of the business, rather than a guy who's just there. I mean, there's already plans being discussed, and ideas, and things along those lines. I've never really had that before. They know exactly what direction they're going in and they know exactly what they want from me from the start. Obviously, you can't predict what exactly is going to happen, but my experience when I first came into WCW, and first coming in to the WWF, it's two different balls of wax, as it should be, because three years ago, I was relatively unknown in the States, and now I have more of a name value. But I'm just really excited with the prospects of what's going to happen.

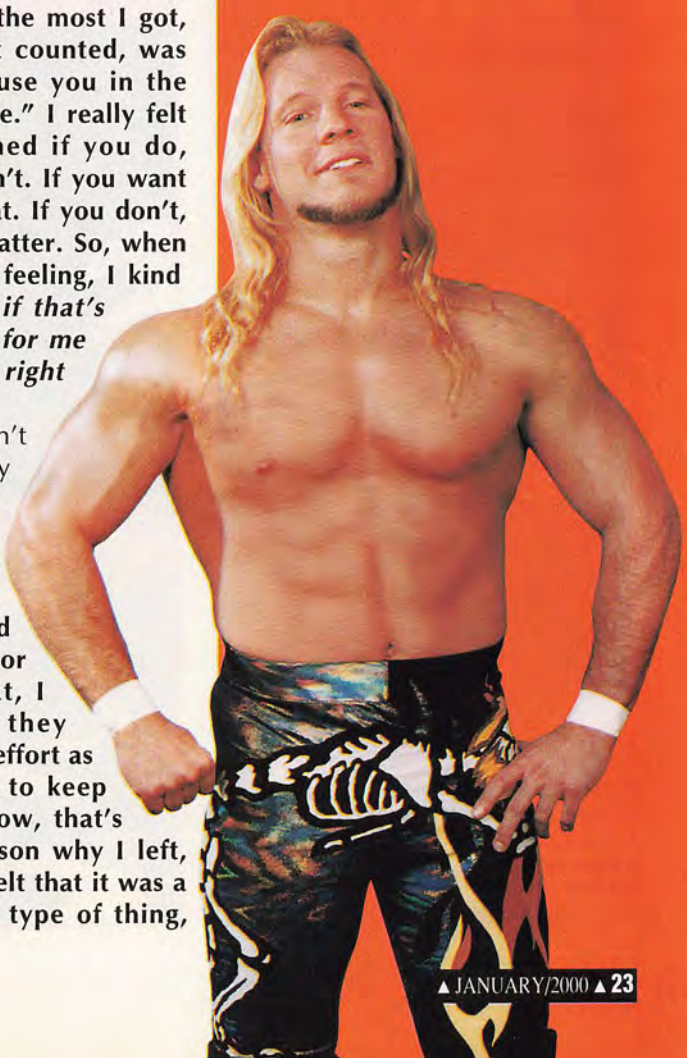
WELSH: Do you think that if you had re-signed with WCW they would have developed some plans for you?

JERICHO: They probably would have had some things planned, but that was one of the things that I asked when I was still kind of debating where I should go: "What kind of plans do you have for me? Where do you want me to go? What do you see me as in the future?" And the most I got, from the guy that counted, was that, "We could use you in the old vs. young angle." I really felt that it was damned if you do, damned if you don't. If you want to stay, that's great. If you don't, it really doesn't matter. So, when I kind of got that feeling, I kind of figured, *Well, if that's the case, it's best for me to not be around right now.*

WELSH: You don't really think they made an effort to keep you then.

JERICHO: They made an effort, but not to sound like an egomaniac or anything like that, I don't think that they made as big of an effort as they should have to keep me there. You know, that's not really the reason why I left, but I just kind of felt that it was a real lackadaisical type of thing,

Every issue, reporters from PRO WRESTLING ILLUSTRATED will participate in an incisive press conference with a top wrestling star. The questions will be demanding. And the answers will reveal the innermost thoughts of the giants of the sport.



where it didn't seem like it mattered. And if that was the case, I didn't really want to be around at that point, because I think that I can contribute more than 75 percent of the guys in the company can. I didn't really feel that they saw that. So, like I said, if that was the case, it was best for me to move on.

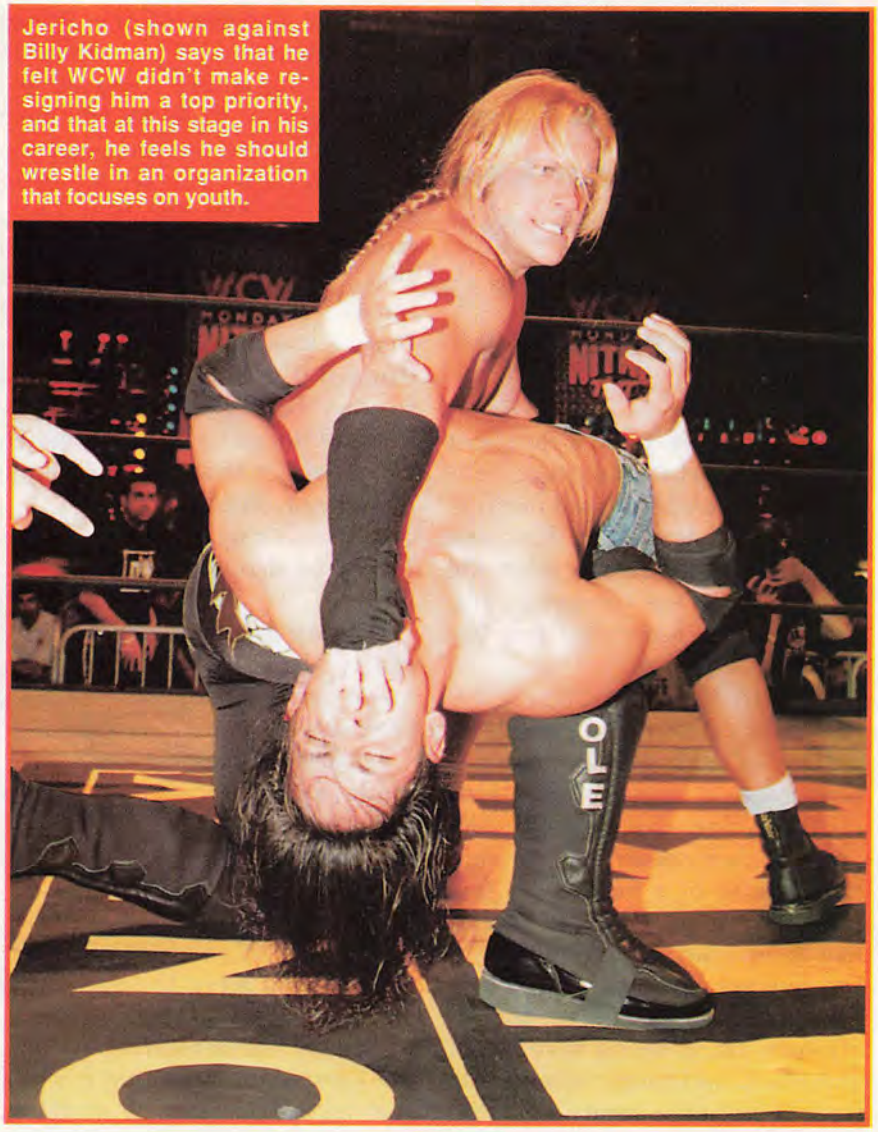
WELSH: So the WWF, they came at you with things proposed and ...

Since signing with the WWF, Chris Jericho has felt like a part of the promotion, like he's an investment in the future of the company. He never got that feeling while with WCW, where, he says, he was just one of the guys.

JERICHO: No, not necessarily. It wasn't like, "If you sign, we will do this or we will do that." That wasn't the case, either. You know, if I play on a sports team, and a hockey team, for example, is saying, "If you stay, then we can probably use you on the third line, maybe on the second line," or the other team is saying, "If we use you, you will definitely be used with the definite kind of perception as being the first-liner for this team that we need. It might not happen when you first get here, but you will definitely have all the chances in the world to get there, and if you have the ability and if you show what you've shown already, there is no reason why you won't." That sort of a thing.

WELSH: And do you believe that from the WWF?

JERICHO: Well, there's no reason for me not to believe it. In the future, maybe I'll think in retrospect, but I have no doubt in my mind. If you look at their roster, it's true. They use every single guy to the extent of their abilities because they have to. They don't have 100 guys with an unlimited pocket. Every single person there has to pull his weight, and if you have any kind of idea how to do that, you get rewarded and you get a chance to really show what you can do. And for the guys who it hasn't happened with, I figure it had to do more with the guys than with



Jericho (shown against Billy Kidman) says that he felt WCW didn't make re-signing him a top priority, and that at this stage in his career, he feels he should wrestle in an organization that focuses on youth.

the actual promotion behind them.

WELSH: In WCW, do you think that it was management or the veteran wrestlers keeping you back?

JERICHO: I'm not saying anybody is keeping anybody from anything. In a way, they're keeping guys from it, but I don't know if they realize it or not. It's not every guy, either. I'd say there's a good handful of guys, five or six guys, that have the potential to be main event guys right now, or at least contributing in that respect. And there's four or five guys who are in the main event position who shouldn't be there. That's just life. Time marches on, and after a while, people just get sick of the same kind of product. I don't know if WCW realizes that. A lot of people in the management positions do, but a lot of people don't. And I'm not faulting them for that. If that's the way they want to take the direction of the company, that's great. Those guys have a place in wrestling history, but I'm not 40. I'm 28 years old and maybe right now it's better for me to be in a place that concentrates more on guys of that age.

WELSH: Do you think the entrance of Shane Douglas will help the Benoits, the Malenkos, and the Guerreros? Do you think he'll be more vocal for them, being that he's considered a main event performer?

JERICHO: Honestly, they'll let him go as far as Chris and Dean have gone, and that'll be about it. He's not gonna be in a main event position. Not because he doesn't deserve to be, but because there's a lot of politics there. I just think, once again, you can see where they brought him in. In my estimation, in my experience, wherever WCW brings someone in, that's basically where they stay. So you look at Shane Douglas. He came in with Chris and Dean. That's where he's gonna be. You look at Sid. He came in with Nash. That's where he is. Rodman came in with Savage, and he made the save for Savage, so now he's with Savage. Rodman deserves to be losing opening matches to Johnny Swinger in my opinion, but that's just my opinion. That's something that Paul E. Dangerously (ECW owner Paul Heyman) told me a long time ago, and he was right. Where they bring you in, that's where you stay, 'cause that's the perception of the management. And there's been very few guys that have risen above that position. If you look at their roster right now, I think you'll see what I mean. The only guy who has kind of broke through

(Continued on page 54)

Ric Flair is one of the sport's all-time greats, and when he brought up Jericho's name during an in-ring interview, it turned heads. Jericho wishes he was given the chance to work with Flair more during his stay in WCW.

When Jericho debuted in WCW, he was coming off very successful stints in Calgary, Japan, and ECW, but WCW promoters didn't see him as a top-flight star. He says it wasn't until early-'98 that he got his first chance to shine.

Photos by Steve Beyer

Big Game Hunter!

SummerSlam '99 Starts Open Season On The WWF!

The hunt was on even when Hunter Hearst Helmsley was just a contender. Now that he has captured his prey, the WWF World title, his quest won't end. The hunt continues with even greater zeal, sadism, and bloodlust

By Steve Anderson

HUNTER HEARST Helmsley *(championus aggressivus)*: a predator who stalks and attacks his prey, but only when its back is turned. Often seen with other predators, Shane McMahon *(executivus cowardus)* and Chyna *(femininus monstrus)*. Common prey includes Mankind *(maskus freakus)*, a friendly beast whose deformed right hand is covered in wool, and The Rock *(risenus eyebrowus)*, who utters a battle cry that becomes easily recognizable.

For the new WWF World champion, the federation he rules seems like wide-open terrain. He is the predator in search of prey. He longed for the opportunity to prove he was the strongest of the strong, and now that he has it, Hunter Hearst Helmsley does not intend to let anyone take it away from him.

His anger was simmering well before SummerSlam '99. He knew his opportunity was close after years of being, as he put it, "held back" as some form of punishment for showing his appreciation for departing friends. This summer, he won the Fully Loaded matchup with The Rock to earn his number-one contender spot. "Triple-H" had taken every step necessary. Despite all the problems he had with the front office, he had performed up to his and the WWF's expectations.

Yet, according to Helmsley, the WWF still tried to take his shot away.

"The WWF fears a guy like me," said "Triple-H." "I don't have snazzy catch phrases. I don't follow anyone's lead and I don't worry about consequences. I don't follow any particular standard. There is only one standard. Mine. I make it up as I go along."

Ironically, that's how "Triple-H" feels when it comes to the WWF's handing of his number-one contender status.

"They tried to rip me off," recalled the World champion. "I played by their rules. I did everything they wanted me to do and everything they said I had to do. I paid the price for what they saw as past mistakes. But they put up obstacles every step of the way. The front office and

Steve Austin pulled the strings and tried to keep me out of that main event at SummerSlam."

Helmsley won, then lost, then shared the number-one contender spot. His one-on-one match with Austin became a triple threat match, as Mankind was suddenly added to the equation. "Triple-H" was still determined to overcome the odds.

But when SummerSlam '99 ended, it was Mankind with the belt, not "Triple-H."

That's when Helmsley declared open season on *everyone* in the WWF. Anyone who tried to stand in Helmsley's way would suffer his wrath, he vowed. It was at that time that he prepared for the violent and

Hunter Hearst Helmsley punished "Stone-Cold" Steve Austin on both sides of the ring and did everything he could to get a shot at Austin's title, but the WWF felt Mankind was just as worthy.

Jeff Hardy takes to the air vs. Christian

SUMMERSLAM '99: MATCH BY MATCH

Intercontinental/European champion D-Lo Brown vs. Jeff Jarrett. Initially, Jarrett didn't want the services of Debra and banished her to the dressing room, but she later re-emerged in the *champ's* corner. Ultimately, it was revealed to be an elaborate ruse. Not only did Debra turn against Brown, but former friend Mark Henry smashed Jarrett's guitar over D-Lo's head, costing him both titles.

Tag team turmoil. Six WWF tag teams competed in a gauntlet-style match in which two teams would start and the winning team would face additional teams one at a time. The bout started with the high-flying, risk-taking antics of The Hardy Boyz and their foes, Edge and Christian. The former Brood members would go on to defeat The Hardy Boyz, Viscera and Midian, and Droz and Prince Albert, but would fall to The Acolytes, who later beat Bob and Crash Holly to win the bout.

Hardcore champion Big Bossman vs. Al Snow. Snow was determined to win back his hardcore strap and went to any means necessary to upend the Cobb County, Georgia, native. The two battled on the streets of Min-

Minnesota Governor Jesse Ventura was brought in to keep law and order at SummerSlam '99, and he refused to count Helmsley's pin attempt on Austin because "Triple-H" used a chair against the champ. That only made Hunter angrier.

bloody hunt for the people who threatened to prevent him from attaining his career goals. The anger that once simmered was now boiling over.

Helmsley's first victim was Austin. As Mankind held the belt high, "Triple-H" wielded a chair and attacked "Stone-Cold's" knees. The assault was sadistic, vicious, and unprovoked.

But that incident seemed mild compared to what "Triple-H" perpetrated less than 24 hours later. He attacked his second victim, WWF commentator Jim Ross, and broke his arm. Ross is an unapologetic cheerleader for Austin and Mankind

neapolis, in a local bar, and even in a men's room. "Road Dogg" Jesse James provided on-the-spot color commentary. Annoyed, Bossman attacked James, who in turn struck Bossman with his own nightstick, allowing Snow to get the victory and the title.

Women's champion Ivory vs. Tori. Ivory's first high-profile title defense was against former Sable worshiper Tori. The match was short, but Ivory successfully defended her belt against the former LPWA champion. A victory, however, was not enough for Ivory, as she attacked Tori and tore at her clothes afterward. Much to the chagrin of male fans, Luna Vachon made her WWF return and rescued the nearly disrobed challenger.

Ken Shamrock vs. Steve Blackman. The "Lion's Den" was the setting for this bitter brawl. The weapons match stipulation allowed both men to use a weapon of choice, as if the chain-link walls of the cage were not punishing enough. Blackman had an early advantage, but Shamrock used a kendo stick to subdue "The Lethal Weapon" and secure a victory.

Test vs. Shane McMahon. No titles at stake here, just the right for Test to date Stephanie McMahon, Shane's sister. If Test lost, he could

(Continued on page 30)

Shane McMahon and Test stole the show!

"Triple-H" went for the cover on Austin, but Mankind pulled Helmsley off and made the pin to win the WWF World title. One night later, however, an enraged Helmsley would defeat Mankind to win his first WWF World title.

and does not hide his bias. "Triple-H" took exception to that and moved in for the kill. A combination of anger over the attack and an order by Shane McMahon put Mankind in the unenviable position of being victim number three.

"Mankind didn't have a choice. He *had* to defend that title against me. It was the shot I should have had the night before," said "Triple-H". "His buddy was being carted off to the hospital and he thought he could exact a little revenge on me. That's not how it was gonna work."

Two obstacles removed for the angry hunter and unfeeling predator, one more to go. And this was the biggest prize of them all. A catch that would bring him the coveted trophy that consumed his every thought: the WWF World heavyweight championship belt.

History will show that "Triple-H" won his first WWF World title on August 23, 1999, the night after SummerSlam '99, with a little help from friend, federation owner, and special referee Shane McMahon. But Helmsley's desire to continue the hunt would not end there. His anger had now festered into pure rage. The belt was secured around his waist, but that didn't mean hunt-

SUMMERSLAM '99

(Continued from page 29)

never see his intended again. While this may not be a Match of the Year candidate, it could make Shane a legitimate contender for Rookie of the Year honors. Shane stole the show by taking great risks. At times he looked like a seasoned hardcore wrestler, but he couldn't stop Test, who also overcame interference from The Mean Street Posse.

World tag team champions X-Pac and Kane vs. The Undertaker and "Big Show" Paul Wight. Despite the size of Kane and their edge in experience as a team, X-Pac and Kane were the underdogs. Undertaker and Wight dominated the champs, but did not function well as a team, since 'Taker dictated when Wight was to wrestle. 'Taker pinned X-Pac for the title, but the new champs were in no mood to celebrate and exchanged dirty looks at the conclusion of the bout.

The Rock vs. Billy Gunn. In a bout in which the loser had to kiss the winner's posterior, "B.A." introduced a new, shall we say, *wrinkle* to the stipulation. He brought out a woman of larger stature and announced that The Rock would have to attach his lips to her backside. But that didn't happen, as Gunn, who couldn't overcome the people's elbow, found *his* lips firmly pressed against the lady's pantyhose.

World champion Steve Austin vs. Mankind vs. Hunter Hearst Helmsley (special referee Jesse Ventura). Austin faced a two-pronged attack against the returning Mankind and a very disgruntled "Triple-H." Also returning to the WWF ring was Minnesota Governor Jesse Ventura. The three men battled in and out of the ring, with Chyna and Shane McMahon interfering on behalf of Helmsley. In the end, it was Mankind shocking the crowd by pinning Austin with Ventura making the three-count.

Helmsley targeted Austin's bad knee throughout their match at SummerSlam '99 and put "Stone-Cold" on the shelf for weeks with a vicious postmatch attack.

ing season was over. In fact, it was just starting.

"Don't think for one minute that I'm letting up on anyone just because I've got this strap now," said Helmsley. "This is just starting. Now my job is to keep this belt. That's just what I intend to do—by any means possible. You see, I am 'The Game.' Anyone standing in my way is going to get hurt."

You've heard of fighting champions. Helmsley is a *hunting* champion.

"I refuse to wait for some championship committee to select contenders," said "Triple-H." "I'll go out and find them myself. I'll hand-pick everyone who faces me if I have to. Rankings and win-loss records mean nothing to me. I want blood."

Mankind and The Rock will most likely be Helmsley's favorite victims. With help from Shane McMahon, "Triple-H" has tried to prevent them from obtaining title matches. With the help of Shawn Michaels, The Rock failed in his first attempt against the new champion. But all the gyrations and attempts to sabotage their title hopes resulted in The Rock and Mankind winning the WWF World tag team title ... and they still remain top contenders to Hunter's title.

"I don't care if it's The Rock or if it's Mankind. No matter who it is, I just want them to know that it will not be an easy route to get to this belt," threatened "Triple-H." "They think I put up obstacles. What about the ones I faced years ago and just recently? If they can feel an ounce of the turmoil I felt, I'll be satisfied.

"I am the one lying in the brush, waiting for them to emerge. Then, when I see them, I'll move in slowly and decisively. They'll never know what hit them."

Helmsley had the talent and the bravado to become the WWF World champion. He proved that he could overcome conspiracy and back room deals. He showed that a mid-card wrestler entering the WWF amid little fanfare could create his own excitement.

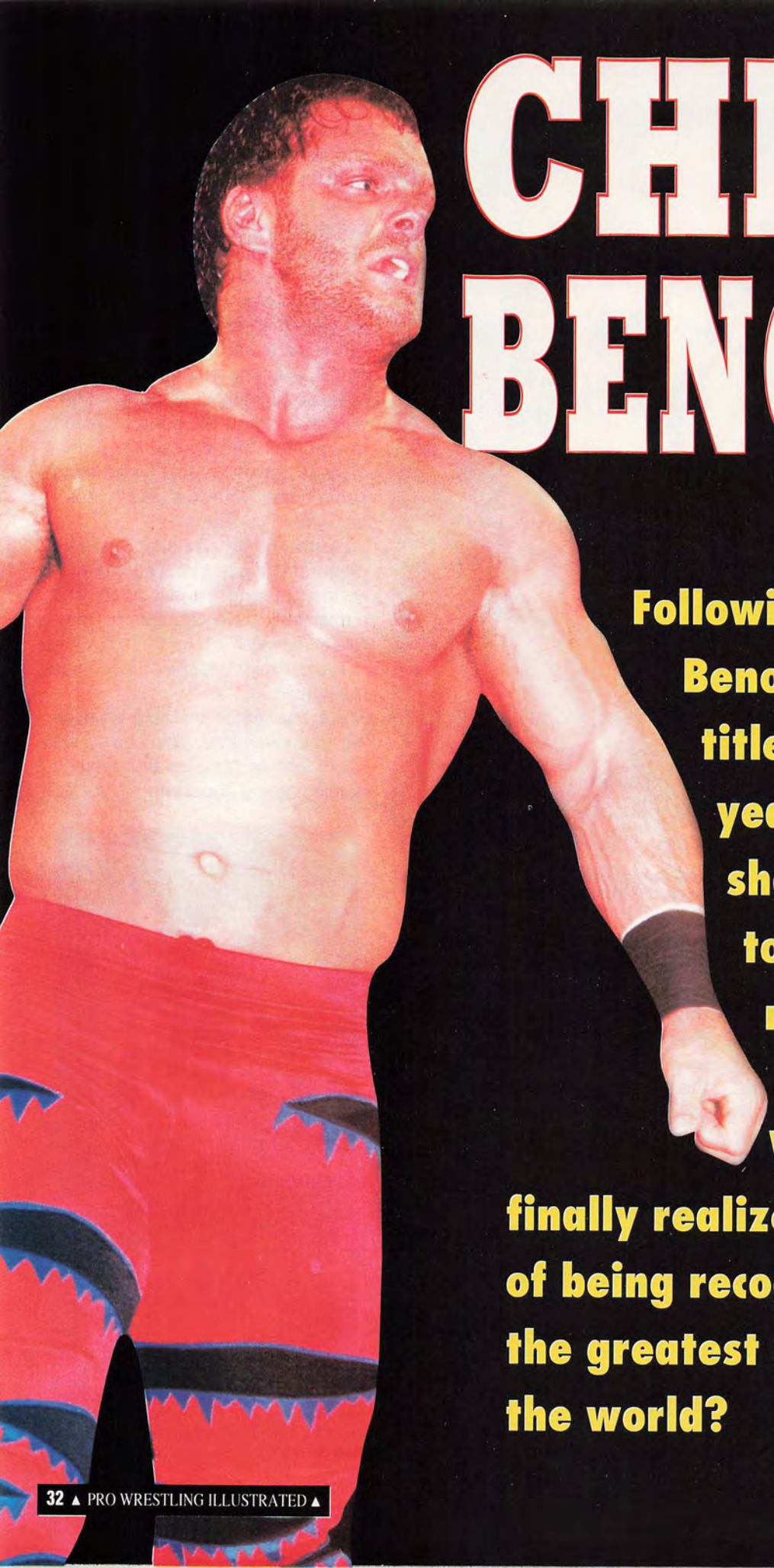
"Make no mistake about it. After I beat them, they will be trophies on my mantel. The first of many trophies to come. You can call it a big game hunt if you want. But remember, I am 'The Game.'"

Hunter is the champion. His dream has come true. But, ironically, in capturing the big prize, this hunter may have changed his own role in the WWF.

Typically, the champion becomes the hunted.

But, then again, if "Triple-H" is trying to convey one message to the WWF and its fans, it's that there is nothing typical about him. □

Ventura, Mankind, and Austin ... no wonder Helmsley felt the WWF was trying to cheat him out of the World title. Here he takes out some of his frustration on Mankind.



CHRIS BENOIT:

Following Chris Benoit's U.S. title victory, the year 2000 is shaping up to be his make-or-break year. Will Benoit finally realize his dream of being recognized as the greatest wrestler in the world?

GREATNESS WITHIN HIS GRASP!

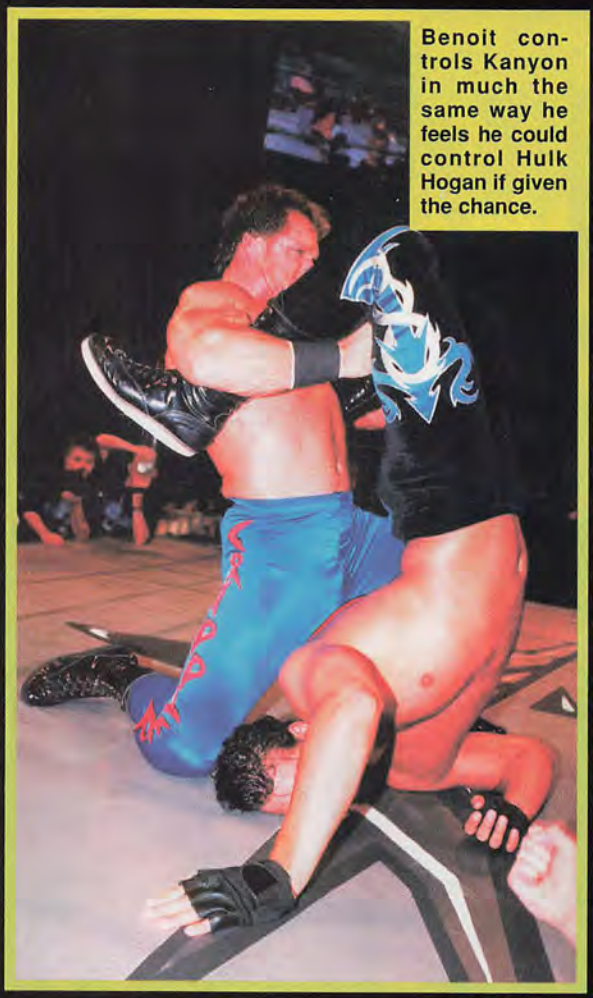
(Is It Too Early To Start Thinking About Next Year's "500"?)

Chris Benoit's performance against Dallas Page both at the Road Wild pay-per-view and on subsequent arena cards impressed almost everyone in the sport.

Though Benoit has become known for his outstanding performances in cruiserweight bouts against such stars as Chavo Guerrero Jr., he is now being considered World title material.

By Harry Burkett

WILL 2000 BE Chris Benoit's breakthrough year? If Benoit maintains the same pace in 2000 that he has in the last half of '99, then his greatness will no longer be regarded as potential. It will be reality.



Benoit controls Kanyon in much the same way he feels he could control Hulk Hogan if given the chance.

Benoit's U.S. title victory over David Flair on August 9 was quite real—and an accomplishment that had been four years in the making. He traded the WCW TV title with Booker T a couple of times in 1998, resulting only in two one-day reigns. The matter was considered so insignificant that it was never even mentioned on WCW TV programs.

If critics brushed off the 177-pound Flair as easy pickings, Benoit forced them to take notice with his victory over Dallas Page at Road Wild only five days later. For the first time, there are rumblings about Benoit becoming a serious World title contender.

"If I haven't lived up to expectations in WCW, it's not because of a lack of trying," Benoit said. "I've tried every strategy possible. I started in the cruiserweight division and quickly realized that wouldn't get me near the World heavyweight title. Then I noticed how WCW was splitting into factions, and I knew I'd better be part of an elite one, which is why I joined The Four Horsemen. I also tried to establish myself individually in that long, drawn-out feud with Kevin Sullivan."

Benoit emerged as the undisputed victor in that feud, defeating Sullivan in a retirement match in July 1997. He was crushed when Flair disbanded the Horsemen two months later. Benoit drifted for a while as he feuded with Dallas Page and Raven's Flock. As if Sullivan and Raven hadn't bashed his head into the wall enough, Benoit felt as if he were bashing his head again, and begged Arn Anderson to re-form The Four Horsemen and lure Ric Flair back to WCW.

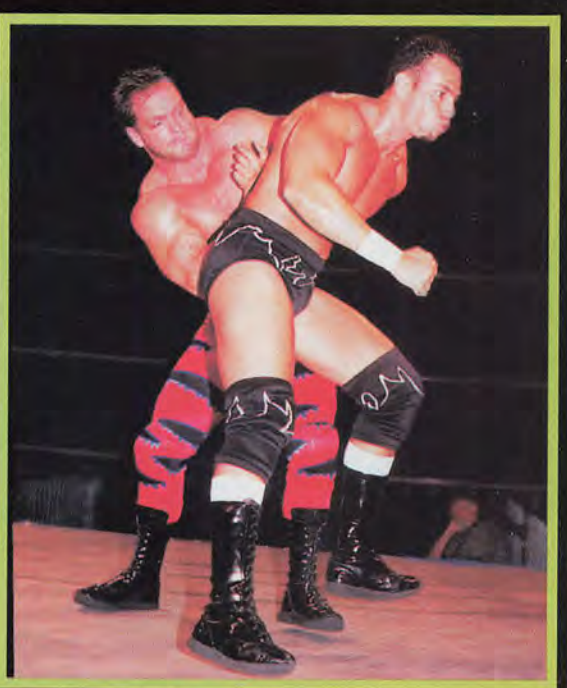
"I was looking for something that would work for me at that point," Benoit remembered. "I thought things would be different the second time around. I thought I'd be treated like a senior member. I thought wrong."

Ultimately, Flair's ego destroyed the last incarnation of the Horsemen. He began making decisions as WCW president that benefited himself, not the Horsemen. He even awarded Bam Bam Bigelow and Dallas Page a shot at World tag team champs Perry Saturn and Raven, leaving the team of Benoit and Dean Malenko in the cold.

All that changed when Shane Douglas entered WCW. He invited Benoit, Malenko, and Saturn to join him in a revolution to change the pecking order of the federation. Benoit's predicament of being held back at a time he should have been blossoming became the rallying cry of their cause. To Benoit, that union was a turning point in his career.

"I'm not going to rush any of this, though. First, I want to distinguish myself as a fighting U.S. champion. If I don't dedicate myself to defending this belt full-time, then I'll be just as guilty as guys like Flair and Roddy Piper," he said.

(Continued on page 49)

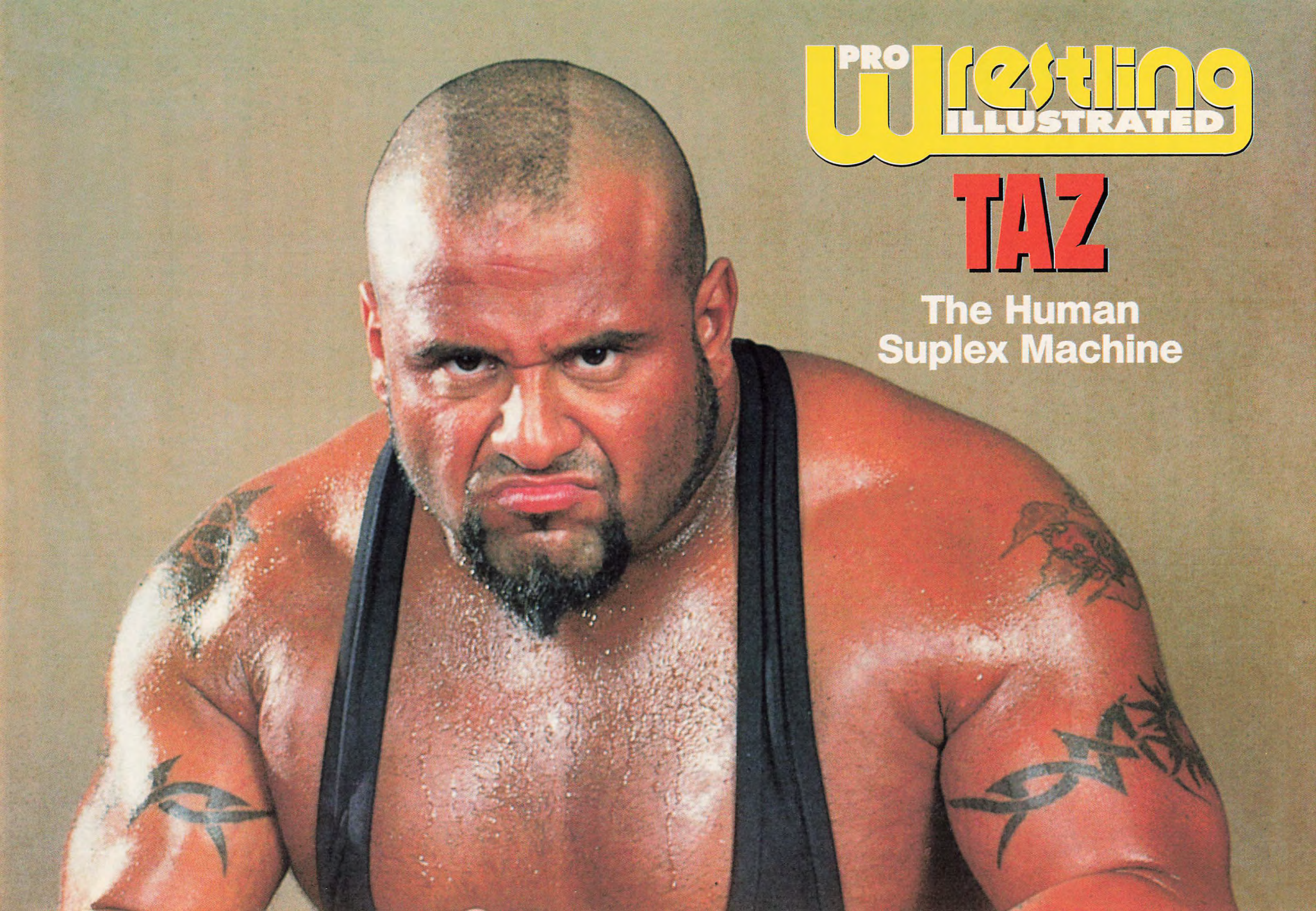


Can Benoit's cruiserweight skills carry him through the toughest heavyweight bouts? We'll find out now that he's U.S. champion.

close-up:

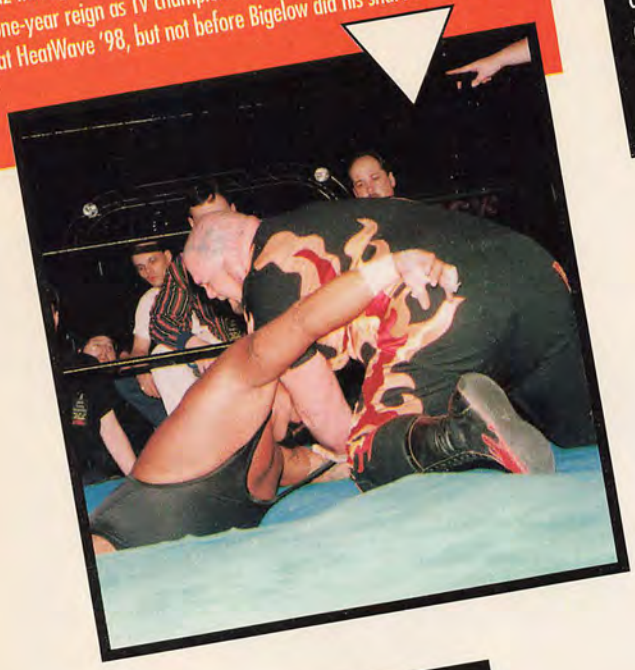
TAZ

NICKNAMED "THE HUMAN Suplex Machine," Taz is considered one of the finest mat wrestlers in the world … Born October 11, 1967, in Brooklyn … Checks in at 5'9", 248 pounds … Has competed in judo since age nine … Played football and wrestled during high school and college … Trained by former pro Johnny Rodz … Made his pro debut on June 3, 1987, in San Juan, Puerto Rico … Spent the next three years wrestling in Puerto Rico and for Northeast U.S. independents … Got his first break when he started wrestling for New Japan in 1990. Faced such top-notch competitors as Jushin Liger, Chris Benoit, Dean Malenko, The Great Muta, and Masa Chono … Was known as Tasmaniac then … From 1990 through 1993, wrestled in Smoky Mountain and had a short stay in the USWA. Also wrestled on and off for the IWCCW, in which he won the light heavyweight and tag team titles … Made his ECW debut on October 1, 1993, and lost to Sabu … Teamed with Kevin Sullivan to beat Tommy Dreamer and Shane Douglas for the ECW tag belts on December 4, 1993 … Won his first ECW TV title by pinning Sabu on March 6 in Philadelphia … His title reign didn't last long. Later in the evening, J.T. Smith pinned Taz for the belt … Brought a tree branch to the ring for an eight-man tag team match pitting Public Enemy, Shane Douglas, and Mr. Hughes against Taz, Sullivan, Terry Funk, and Road Warrior Hawk. Johnny Grunge pummeled Taz … Helped Mikey Whipwreck win the ECW TV title on May 13, 1994, by distracting Pit Bull II … Later in the evening, he pinned The Sandman … Beat Pit Bull Psycho Mike in a dog-collar match at ECW's "Hostile City Showdown" on June 24 in Philadelphia … Formed a tag team with Jimmy Snuka after coming to Snuka's aid during a tag team match on July 15 … Snuka and Taz beat The Pit Bulls … Lost to TV champ Dean Malenko on November 5, 1994 … Broke up with Sullivan when he saved Sabu from an attack by The Pit Bulls … Teamed with Sabu to beat Dean and Joe Malenko … Pinned Al Snow on December 10, 1994 … Teamed with 911 and Sabu to beat Dean Malenko, Chris Benoit, and Public Enemy in a handicap match when Taz pinned Johnny Grunge … He and Sabu won the ECW tag belts from Public Enemy on February 4, 1995. The only way to win was to smash both members of the opposing team through a table … Just three weeks later, Taz and Sabu lost the belts to Benoit and Dean Malenko … Taz and Rick Steiner got a shot at the ECW tag belts in a three-way match on April 8, 1995, but lost to Public Enemy … In June, he suffered a broken neck when he was spike piledrived by 2 Cold Scorpio and Dean Malenko in Fort Lauderdale … Meanwhile, Sabu departed for WCW … Returned to the ring and beat Jason by submission on October 7, 1995 … Signed Bill Alfonso as his manager, saying that nobody but Alfonso cared about him when he was injured … Used his Taz-mission (katahajimi) to score several victories over Hack Myers … Kept piling up victories over lower-level opponents but never got title shots … Battled another suplex master, Chris Jericho, on March 9 at the ECW Arena. The two matched suplexes, and Jericho won by disqualification when Alfonso interfered … Beat Mikey Whipwreck, Rob Van Dam, and 2 Cold Scorpio … An October 5, 1996, match against Johnny Smith match was interesting because both men wrestled amateur-style for long stretches. Taz won with his Taz-mission … Was angry that ECW welcomed Sabu back to the federation with open arms … Called out Sabu for months until Sabu finally responded, starting a feud that has never really ended … Beat Rob Van Dam on December 7 at the ECW Arena … Defeated Sabu at ECW's first pay-per-view, Barely Legal, on April 13, 1997. After the match, Sabu wanted to show how much he respected his former partner. After the two embraced, Van Dam, Sabu's regular partner, attacked Taz. Sabu and Van Dam then both attacked Taz. Bill Alfonso, Taz' manager, tore off his Team Taz shirt to reveal a Sabu T-shirt underneath … Teamed with The Eliminators to defeat Sabu, Van Dam, and D-Von Dudley … Was pinned by Sabu on June 7 at the ECW Arena. Taz then stood up, challenged Shane Douglas to a match, and pinned him in three minutes for the TV title … Embarked on what was at the time the longest TV title reign in ECW history—nearly nine months … Battled Tommy Dreamer to a no-contest … Beat Candido with the Taz-mission … Teamed with Dreamer to beat Sabu and Van Dam … Decisively beat Pit Bull II at November to Remember on November 30, 1997. After the match, Brakkus was about to attack him when security intervened … Used his Taz-mission to beat 2 Cold Scorpio in a thrilling match on January 10, 1998 … Bam Bam Bigelow convinced Taz to team with him against The Triple Threat's Candido and Lance Storm. Bigelow stunned Taz by striking him with the TV belt, then helped Douglas and Candido beat up Storm … Bigelow beat Taz for the title at Living Dangerously on March 1, 1998. Bigelow appeared to have tapped out to the Taz-mission, but the referee was out of position, and the match continued. Bigelow smashed Taz through the ring, then emerged with Taz's limp body and scored the pin. Taz suffered a separated shoulder and missed nearly two months … Defeated Bigelow by submission at HeatWave '98 on August 2. Bigelow tapped out in this falls-count-anywhere match. Afterward, Bigelow claimed he was reaching for the ropes and didn't quit … Formed the new Triple Threat with Sabu and Rob Van Dam. That alliance lasted only a month … Couldn't save Van Dam and Sabu from an attack by The Dudley Boyz on October 24, 1998, and the Dudleys won the tag belts … Had a falling-out with Sabu during a six-man match. With Shane Douglas about to submit to Taz, Sabu used an Arabian facebuster on Shane, then pushed aside Taz before pinning Douglas … Spent months lobbying ECW officials for a shot at ECW champ Douglas … Teamed with Douglas and lost to Sabu and Van Dam. Douglas offered Taz a shot at the ECW heavyweight title if he watched his back … Created his own belt, the FTW heavyweight title … Purposely lost the FTW belt to Sabu in a match in which Taz suplexed Sabu through a table and broke his neck … Finally got his shot at the title and won it by pinning Douglas at the Guilty as Charged pay-per-view on January 10, 1999 … Taz and Douglas slugged it out all over the building. Taz dragon-plexed the champion through the table, then went for the cover. The lights went out, and Sabu's music played. Sabu charged the ring and attacked both men, then flattened both with a triple-jump moonsault. Douglas called for The Triple Threat. Out came Candido and Tammy Lynn Sytch, but instead of attacking Taz, Candido punched Douglas, and Sytch tangled with Francine. Taz beat Douglas with the Taz-mission … When Candido battled Taz for the title six days later, Douglas attacked Candido and challenged Taz to a rematch. Taz accepted and the two brawled through the crowd, out of the building, and back into the ring, where Douglas was Taz-plexed through a table and pinned … Beat Sabu at Living Dangerously on March 21 in Asbury Park, New Jersey. It was a classic falls-count-anywhere match in which both men used chairs and tables. With 18 minutes gone, Taz clamped on his Taz-mission and Sabu's manager, Bill Alfonso, threw in the towel. Sabu tossed it out of the ring, but shortly thereafter Sabu, his face covered with blood, was locked in the Taz-mission and failed to respond to the referee's final prompting. Afterward, Sabu and Taz shook hands … Opened Hardcore Heaven on May 16 by beating Candido in less than a minute. Later, he survived a 3-D from the Dudleys and made Buh Buh Ray tap out in the main event … Engaged in a heated feud with Steve Corino … Scored numerous victories over Yoshihiro Tajiri, Corino's charge … Beat Tajiri at HeatWave '99 in Dayton, Ohio … Just before press time, sources indicated that Taz had agreed to a deal with the WWF. □


PRO Wrestling ILLUSTRATED
TAZ
The Human
Suplex Machine

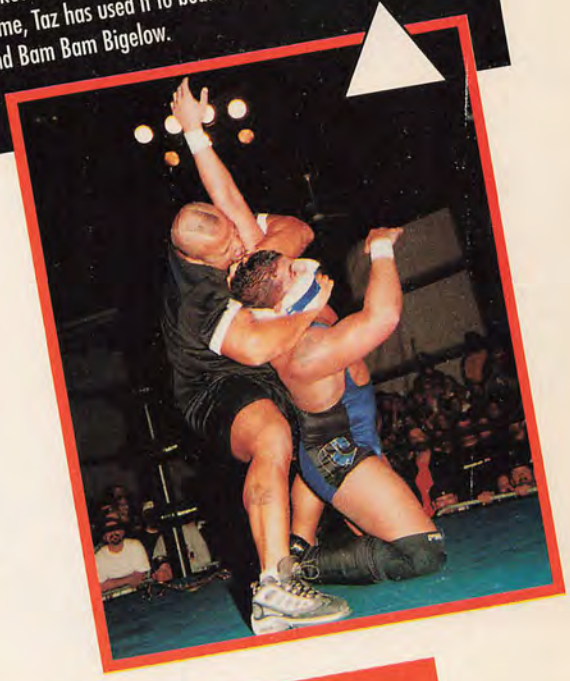
TOUGHEST OPPONENT

Bam Bam Bigelow. In a promotion in which hardcore is the law of the land, Bam Bam Bigelow didn't try to be hardcore—he simply was hardcore. Taz couldn't match Bigelow's power and had to continually find creative ways to try to bring the big man down. When Bigelow put Taz through the mat at Living Dangerously '98, he ended Taz' nearly one-year reign as TV champion. Taz would get a measure of revenge at HeatWave '98, but not before Bigelow did his share of damage.



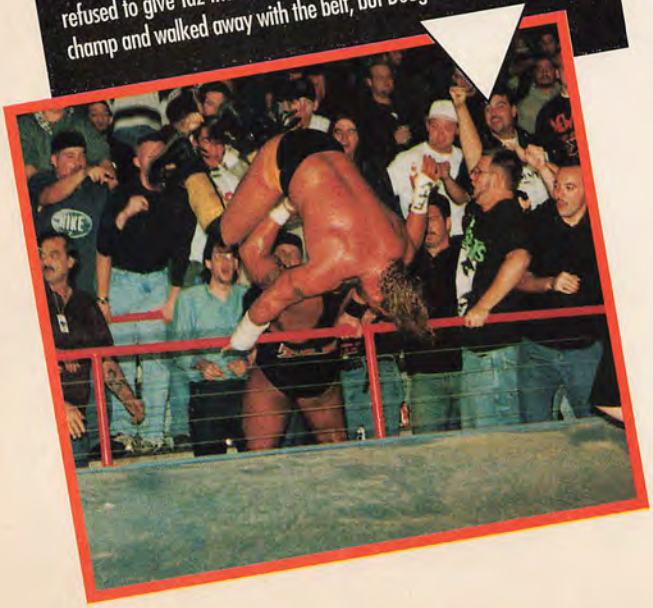
FAVORITE MANEUVER

Katahajimi. Taz' arsenal of suplexes is second to none, but when it comes to time to finish the match, it's the katahajimi, also known as the Taz-mission, that he locks on. It's virtually an inescapable hold, and if you don't tap out, you'll get choked out. One of the most feared submission holds in the game, Taz has used it to beat men like Shane Douglas, Sabu, and Bam Bam Bigelow.



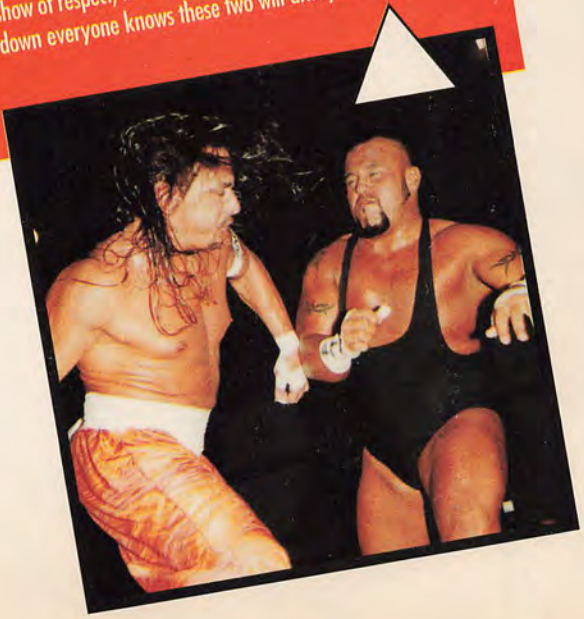
GREATEST MATCH

vs. Shane Douglas, January 10, 1999. No one knew for sure who would win the ECW title match at Guilty as Charged, but two things were certain: Taz wanted to win the belt more than anything, and Douglas would do anything to keep it. In the ultimate act of defiance, Douglas, caught in the Taz-mission and knowing he couldn't escape, refused to give Taz the satisfaction of tapping out. Taz choked out the champ and walked away with the belt, but Douglas retained his honor.



MOST HATED OPPONENT

Sabu. The feud between Taz and Sabu seemed to ignite the moment Taz stepped into ECW. In 1995, they actually held the ECW tag team title together, but the relationship soured after they lost the belts. At Living Dangerously '99, ECW champ Taz beat FTW champ Sabu in a title-unification bout. In a mutual show of respect, the two shook hands after the match, but deep down everyone knows these two will always hate each other.



this month in...

The Wrestler

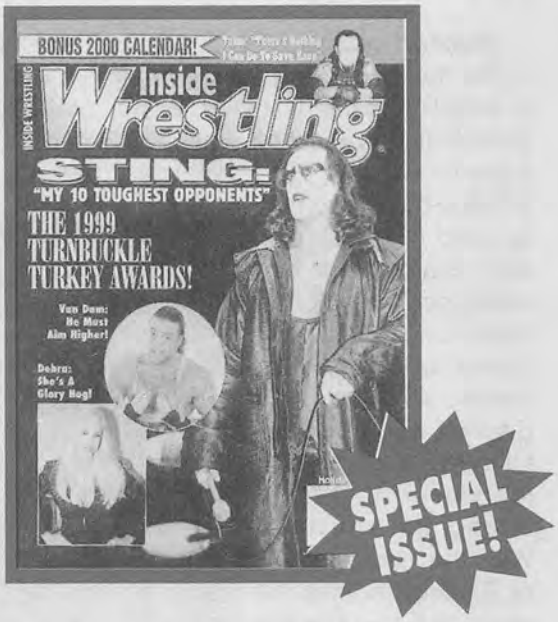
KEVIN NASH: "WCW MESSED WITH THE WRONG MAN"
THE WRESTLER
The Wrestler
WANNA BUY A PIECE OF OUR COMPANY?
Before The WWF Can Sell ... Read What They Had To Tell!
ALSO ...
•The Big Show
•Kanyon
•Volatile ECW Teams
Holiday 1999

VINCE McMAHON is taking the WWF public. That means *you* could own a piece of the company. But before any company starts selling stock, it must make a lot of information about itself available to the public. We'll give you the shocking highlights! ... So **KEVIN NASH** has retired after his loss to **HULK HOGAN**. Don't believe it! Just read what he said in "Q & A"! ... You may not like **KANYON's** attitude, but you should respect his skills. He's a key player in WCW for a number of reasons. We'll tell you why you should expect big things from him!

All this—and much more!—
in the Holiday 1999 issue of
The Wrestler

NOW ON SALE!

Inside Wrestling



You won't want to miss our 2000 calendar and datebook! ... It's almost time for you to start carving up some delicious Thanksgiving turkey. We have a little turkey of our own to offer you first. Actually, we have 10 turkeys. It's our annual "Turnbuckle Turkey" Awards. **DEBRA**, **ROB VAN DAM**, **KANE**, **REY MISTERIO JR.**, **SHANE McMAHON**, **RENA MERO** are just a few of the stars posing as turkeys this year ... If you've been following **STING's** career for a long time, you'll be interested in finding out who he considers his 10 toughest opponents!

All this—and much more!—
in the Holiday 1999 issue of
Inside Wrestling

NOW ON SALE!

WWF vs. WCW THE MONDAY NIGHT WAR

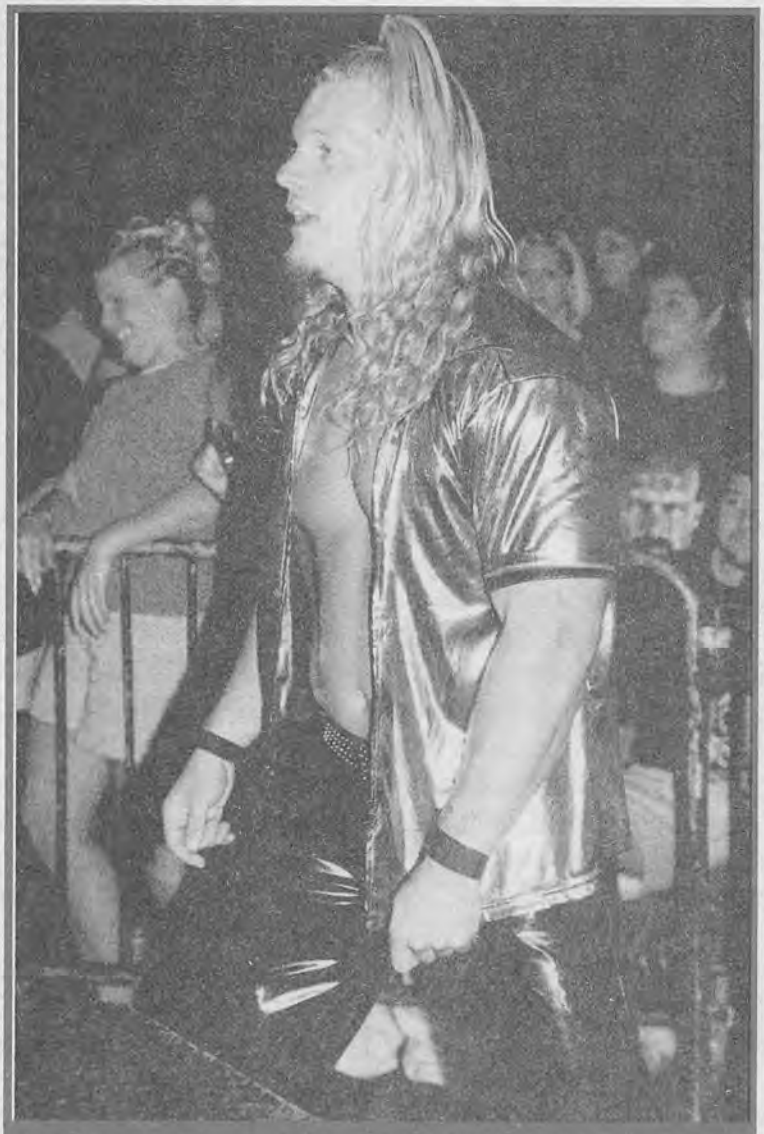
By Jason Kirell

Bischoff reassigned ... In one of the most shocking events in all of wrestling in the past year, WCW President Eric Bischoff was reassigned within Time Warner, WCW's parent company, and will no longer be in charge of the day-to-day operations of the federation. This news comes as a surprise to those who thought Bischoff was all-powerful in WCW and whose job security was as strong as anyone's. With the reassignment of Bischoff comes the promotion to executive vice president of Bill Busch, a relative unknown to many wrestling fans and insiders. He will attempt to do what Bischoff couldn't do—namely get *Nitro* back on top (or at least significantly closer to the top) in the Monday night ratings war, where it was two years ago. Back then, the NWO was the hottest thing in wrestling.

It's sad in a way to see a man like Bischoff lose his job. From what many of his employees—men like "Diamond" Dallas Page and Bret Hart—had to say about him following the announcement, he was liked and respected by a lot of people. Unfortunately, when you don't produce results in this business, even the nicest guys tend to get axed.

Bischoff leaves a legacy in wrestling that will never be forgotten. He became the first man to stand toe-to-toe with the mighty McMahon family and actually manage to make the McMahons sweat.

He was the man in charge when the NWO rose to power and also the man whom many blamed for *Nitro's* decline. Insiders say he might pursue a career in film making. Whatever path Bischoff chooses to take, there's no doubt he'll give his new job everything he has, just as he did when he took over WCW.



Was Chris Jericho worth the investment for the WWF? If you look at the ratings for August 16, you'd have to say he was. The segment in which he ripped into The Undertaker and Big Show was the highest-rated quarter-hour of the night for the WWF.

Smacking around the ratings ... While WCW's *Thunder* might soon be all but forgotten on Thursday nights, one of the newest wrestling shows to hit the air—the first WWF show on network television since *Saturday Night's Main Event*—is off to a hot start. *Smackdown!* debuted on UPN with an excellent 6.0 rating a few months ago and beat out several other network shows during its time slot. That's something UPN had regularly failed to do with its normal programming.

Since becoming a regular show, however, *Smackdown!* has received ratings mostly in the 3.6 to 4.0 range. Maybe if the WWF keeps showing things like

THE MONDAY NIGHT NUMBERS

AUGUST 16

	1Q	2Q	3Q	4Q	5Q	6Q	7Q	8Q	9Q	10Q	11Q	12Q	OR	Composite
Raw	—	—	—	—	5.9	5.7	7.3	6.6	6.9	7.2	6.9	6.2	7.1	6.6
Nitro	3.5	3.5	4.0	4.2	2.8	3.3	2.5	3.0	2.9	2.8	2.9	3.7	4.3	3.3 (3.0*)

*Head-to-head composite

Tuesday Morning Quarterback: **If you look closely at the numbers for this week, you'll see that a 7.3 in 7Q was the highest-rated segment of the evening for either show. This can be attributed to one man: Chris Jericho, who came out and launched a verbal attack on The Undertaker and The Big Show on *Raw*. Even more impressive were the numbers for Chyna's segments, which held up in the high 6s to low 7s. To think, a woman was beating up on *Nitro*.**
(Note: Each ratings point represents 750,000 households; 1Q, 2Q, etc. refer to ratings for each quarter-hour segment of the shows; OR is the rating for the overrun portion of the show.)

THE MONDAY NIGHT NUMBERS

AUGUST 23

	1Q	2Q	3Q	4Q	5Q	6Q	7Q	8Q	9Q	10Q	11Q	12Q	OR	Composite
Raw	—	—	—	—	5.4	5.7	5.6	5.9	6.0	5.4	5.5	5.2	6.4	5.7
Nitro	2.9	3.5	3.3	3.5	2.7	2.5	2.9	2.7	2.6	2.5	2.8	3.4	2.3	2.9 (2.8*)

Tuesday Morning Quarterback: **On a night that featured "Triple-H" truly emerging as a major player in the WWF title picture and the legendary rock group Kiss performing a live show on *Nitro*, it was an overall decline in ratings that ended up being the major story. Quarter-hour ratings in the high-5s for the WWF and mid-2s for WCW weren't enough to even dent the ratings of ABC's telecast of a preseason *Monday Night Football* game. Something that should be very interesting during the NFL's regular season is how both shows do against the *MNF* juggernaut, especially after WWF.com claims ABC offered Vince McMahon $50-million to move *Raw* to another time slot.**

THE MONDAY NIGHT NUMBERS

AUGUST 30

	1Q	2Q	3Q	4Q	5Q	6Q	7Q	8Q	9Q	10Q	11Q	12Q	OR	Composite
Raw	—	—	—	—	3.8	4.5	4.4	4.2	4.5	4.2	4.0	3.7	4.2	4.2
Nitro	2.7	3.4	3.4	3.6	3.9	4.2	4.5	4.2	4.4	4.3	4.3	4.8	4.4	4.0

Tuesday Morning Quarterback: **These numbers are very deceiving (as are those for September 6), since *Raw* started at 11 p.m. in the East due to U.S. Open coverage on the USA Network. Essentially, *Nitro* ended just as *Raw* went on the air in the East. But with the U.S. Open bumping *Raw* out of its usual 9 p.m. EDT slot, *Nitro* was able to capitalize on the fact that it had three unopposed hours in a portion of the country. It managed to do its largest rating in months, a 4.0. Unfortunately, that number was still not enough to end *Raw's* streak of wins over *Nitro*, as it posted a 4.2 rating even though it ended at 1 a.m. EDT. This had to be very disheartening for WCW.**

THE MONDAY NIGHT NUMBERS

SEPTEMBER 6

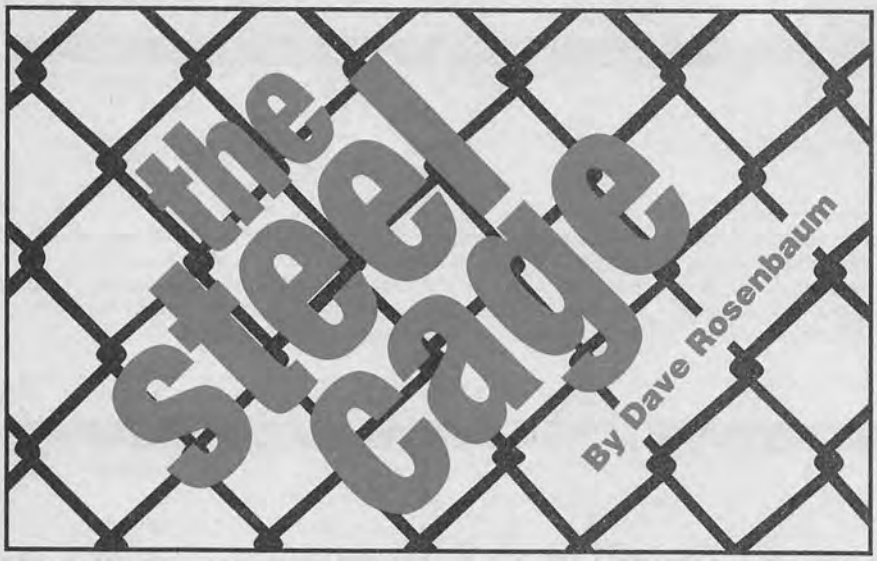
	1Q	2Q	3Q	4Q	5Q	6Q	7Q	8Q	9Q	10Q	11Q	12Q	OR	Composite
Raw	—	—	—	—	4.3	4.6	4.7	4.9	4.3	4.0	4.2	4.2	4.0	4.4
Nitro	3.5	3.7	3.7	4.2	4.5	3.9	4.2	4.2	4.3	4.5	4.5	4.4	4.4	4.1

Tuesday Morning Quarterback: **It looks like a lot of people in the Eastern time zone were willing to make some coffee so they could stay up to watch *Raw*. The WWF show, which for the second week in a row didn't start until 11 p.m. EDT, improved upon the previous week's ratings and managed to grab a 4.4, which was significantly better than *Nitro's* 4.1, especially considering *Nitro* had not one, not two, but three unopposed hours to draw in fans in the East.**

Vince McMahon winning the WWF title (as he did on the September 16 edition) from "Triple-H," the ratings will climb and climb, but right now both parties have to be happy with the success of the show.

ECW gets a show, too ... Let's not forget about the third-largest wrestling company in America, as ECW has also debuted its national show on The Nashville Network. The TNN program is only slightly tamer than ECW's syndicated program. At press time, the show was averaging a rating of slightly less than a 1.0. That's not all that bad considering ECW's fan base is considerably smaller than the WWF's and WCW's at this point.

The show is built around ECW's main players, but recently a familiar face returned to spice up the show. Raven, one of the most popular and most controversial competitors in the promotion's history, returned to the company after being released from WCW. Raven is scheduled to be a regular on the TNN show and should help improve the ratings. Unfortunately, just as ECW gained a superstar, it lost another, as Taz reportedly agreed to a multi-year deal with the WWF just before press time. According to some sources, he could show up in the WWF as early as the Royal Rumble. □



TIME FOR A CHANGE. First of all, a quick note. Those of you who read my column last month, which very sarcastically asked how in the world Rob Van Dam could be rated number two in the *"PWI* 500," are probably asking this question: How in the world is Rosenbaum still alive? How come Van Dam hasn't gone up to the offices of London Publishing and kicked the living crap out of this wise guy?

Well, there are three answers to this question:

1. If Van Dam did go to London Publishing's beautiful and spacious offices in Ambler, Pennsylvania, he'd find Stu Saks, Brandi Mankiewicz, and Dave Lenker, Frank Krewda, Will Welsh, and Frank Vitucci, but he wouldn't find me. I don't work out of that office.

2. I work out of my home office in Florida. Van Dam doesn't know where I live. I'd like to keep it that way.

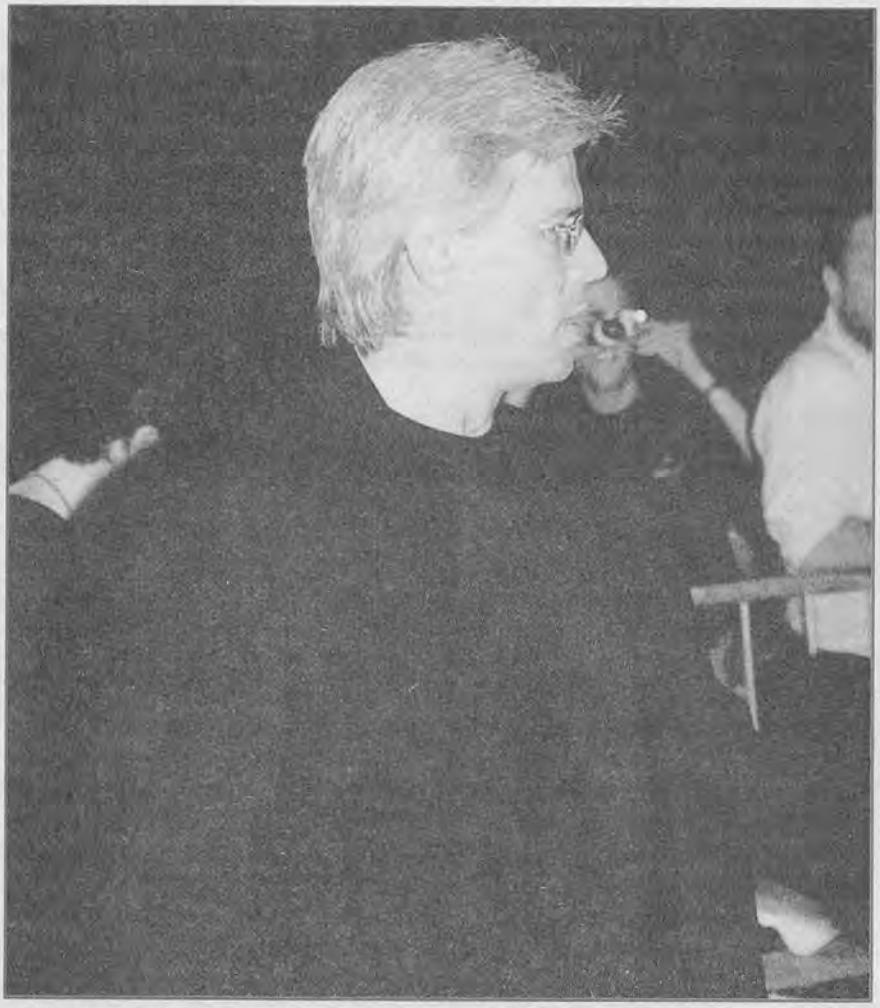
3. At press time for this issue of *PWI,* the *"PWI* 500" issue had not quite hit the stands. This is what you call a "journalistic buffer zone" (the quote marks belong to Dr. Evil). In a—pause—"journalistic buffer zone," the writer of a controversial column has time from when he submits the column to when the issue hits the stands to change his name, get out of the country, or beg the victim, in this case Rob Van Dam, for forgiveness.

I have no intention of doing any of these things, because I'm pretty sure Rob Van Dam feels the same way: "How in the world did I ever get rated number two in the *'PWI* 500?'"

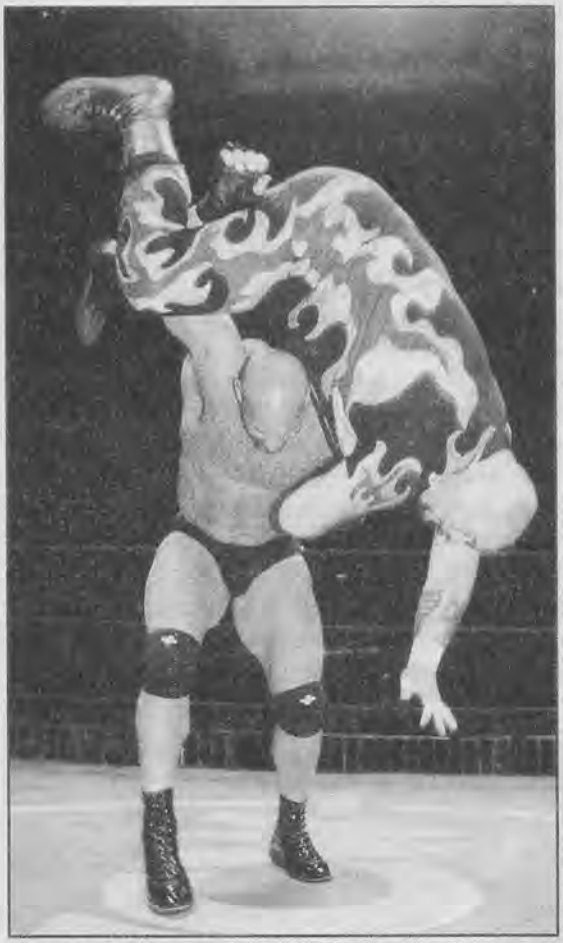
Anyway, on to this month's column.

The subject of this month's column is Eric Bischoff, who recently was removed from his position as president of WCW and replaced by Bill Busch, a man I never heard of. Bischoff's firing was merely a matter of time. The federation has been heading downward for the past year-and-a-half and has really been struggling for the past three or four months. Attendance is down. Ratings are down. Pay-per-view buy rates are down. And let's face it: *Raw* is by far the number-one weekly wrestling show these days.

I never liked Bischoff and I'm glad he's gone. He's one of those slick, obnoxious pretty boys who always gets under my skin. Bischoff really hit rock bottom in that feud with Jay Leno in the summer of '98, when he did a takeoff of a talk show. Bischoff's jokes were never funny. The skit



Eric Bischoff was recently ousted as president of WCW and replaced by new Executive Vice President Bill Busch, whose name most wrestling fans will not recognize. Busch has the unenviable task of making *Nitro* competitive in the ratings war.



As Bill Goldberg proved last summer during his World title reign, he is perhaps WCW's hottest commodity. Busch will in all likelihood be featuring Goldberg a lot more in the future.

was a total waste of time.

Of course, Bischoff will be remembered for some good things, like engineering WCW's revival—it destroyed the WWF in the Monday night ratings war for about 18 months—and helping to make the NWO the most powerful and imaginative force in wrestling. Apparently, however, Bischoff couldn't maintain his creativity for more than a few years, and by 1999, he was really straining to come up with new ideas.

Ironically, however, Bischoff didn't need new ideas. The old ones were fine. He should have stuck with them. NWO vs. WCW. That was fine. Bill Goldberg as WCW's top star. That was fine. Hollywood Hogan as hated rule-breaker. That was fine.

From what I've heard and read, WCW is now going to do everything in its power to get everything it can out of Goldberg, who just a year ago was the hottest thing going, so hot that it was hard to say whether he or Steve Austin was the most popular man in wrestling (seems unbelievable now, doesn't it?).

With Goldberg, WCW was wasting a bona fide superstar, a real hero of the people who had captured the wrestling world's imagination. So it's good to see that Bill Busch recognizes Goldberg's value.

Other rumors that have been tossed around: No more Kiss. Great. No more Road Wild pay-per-views. Tremendous. Bikers scare me. A limited talent roster. WCW might be getting rid of as many as 20 wrestlers. Good. Not for the wrestlers who are being cut, of course, but good for the rest of us. Let's face it, over the past year, WCW has really been straining its talent roster.

You know, come to think of it, we don't need three hours of *Nitro* every week. We need one or two good hours.

And another thing: If *Nitro* is getting destroyed by *Raw,* why doesn't it merely get away from *Raw* and try to find an audience on another night or in another time slot? This would have been a great idea during football season, when a good part of the wrestling audience was watching *Monday Night Football.* Unless something absolutely amazing happens—like Ted Turner stepping into the ring against Bill Goldberg—WCW is not going to catch up to the WWF for quite a while. Maybe it's time for WCW to change tactics.

Meanwhile, I wish Mr. Busch the best of luck in trying to revive WCW, and I wish Mr. Bischoff the best of luck in whatever he does in the future.

I have a pretty good idea he won't be looking for work with the WWF. Even if he does, I have a pretty good idea that the WWF won't be hiring. □

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win lose or draw

By Harry Burkett

CAN YOU BELIEVE it's almost the year 2000? It's one of those important milestones that really won't change your life. It's like watching the ball drop in Times Square on New Year's Eve or watching your car odometer flipping past 100,000 miles. There's a slight adrenaline rush as you reflect upon the passage of time (or the durability of your car) but, within seconds, life goes on as usual.

When future historians or sports analysts study the state of pro wrestling at the turn of the century, I suppose their first resource will be the January 2000 issue of PRO WRESTLING ILLUSTRATED. To be accurate, the January 2000 issue reflects the state of wrestling in September 1999. Yet the all-important cover date will make this issue significant.

Chris Jericho, the self-proclaimed "Millennium Man," graces the cover. There could have been more dignified ways for *PWI* to enter the 21st century. But, since Chris Von Erich is no longer with us (*PWI* once declared he'd be the kid to lead wrestling into the next century), I suppose Jericho embodies the cutting edge more than anyone.

So the year 2000 is upon us. All those around-the-house chores that I conveniently slated as "21st century projects"—such as painting the house, installing a new garage door, and trimming back tree branches—are now beckoning.

As a kid growing up, I always envisioned January 1, 2000, to be quite different than it actually will be. I thought I'd get out of bed, peer out the window, and see people traveling in hovercrafts or beaming to Mars for the holidays. Watching too much *Buck Rogers* will do that to you.

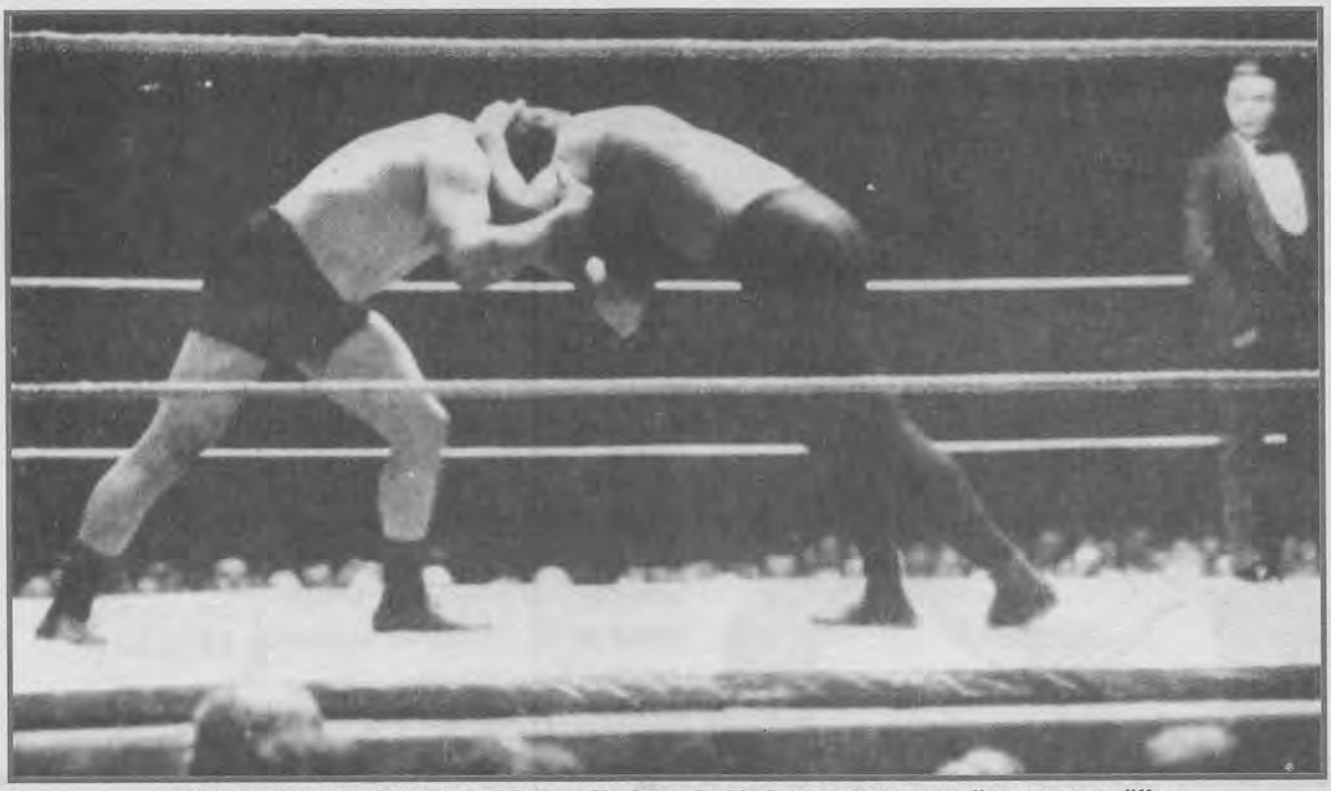
That got me thinking about the future of wrestling. A century from now, will the sport look like anything we're watching today?

Consider the state of wrestling in 1900. There were no blaring entrance themes, pyrotechnics, or pay-per-view-peddling TV announcers. Action rarely left the middle of the ring, and wrestlers never tried aerial maneuvers. Matches were usually best-of-three-falls and lasted one or two hours. In fact, bouts were often plodding affairs that frustrated restless crowds.

However, wrestling has remained fairly constant throughout the century. There were international superstars back in 1900, including Frank Gotch and Tom Jenkins. George Hackenschmidt was the "Millennium Man" of his time, winning world titles in Russia, Europe, and the United States. Hackenschmidt vs. Gotch was the equivalent of Hogan vs. Flair.

During the 20th century, wrestling has evolved from Gorgeous George's valet, Woodrow, to Randy Savage's valet, Gorgeous George. It has evolved from Jimmy Valiant carrying a boom box on his shoulder to

***PWI* once predicted that Chris Von Erich would be the wrestler to lead the sport into the next century. Unfortunately, Chris Von Erich is no longer with us, but Chris Jericho has anointed himself wrestling's "Millennium Man."**



As this photo of Frank Gotch and George Hackenschmidt demonstrates, wrestling was very different at the turn of last century. Or was it? For one thing, wrestlers still engage in collar-and-elbow lockups.

WWF: The Music, Vol. 3. It has evolved from snowy UHF channel 41 to the cable-clarity of the USA Network and TNT.

That's an amazing journey if you ask me.

In the year 2100, we'll probably be watching wrestlers dropping out of helicopters and onto rectangles surrounded by lasers as fans sit home and watch events on 3-D, surround-image, virtual reality videoscopes. In addition to seeing and hearing the pyrotechnics, we'll be able to smell the smoke, too.

We might even have remote controls that allow us to play the part of director right from the comfort of our living rooms. Instead of waiting for the director of *Raw* or *Nitro* to give us a shot of the backstage area, we can choose to take a look whenever we please.

Curious about the impending arrival at the arena of a superstar the magnitude of Steve Austin or Hulk Hogan or Bill Goldberg? Just hit one little button and you'll get a shot of the backstage entrance to the building. You can keep that shot up on the screen as long as you wish. Tired of waiting for him? Then just switch back to the action in the ring. You could even pick the camera angle you like best. Heck, by the year 2100, we'll probably be able to pick one main camera angle for sporting events and put little picture-in-picture boxes up on the screen with all the other different angles.

We may still have the Monday night wars in one form or another. Enterprising cable operators might supply minute-by-minute ratings numbers in the lower left-hand corner of the screen. TV and the Internet will be one and the same. Perhaps fans will be able to select the matches they want to see at no cost, rather than calling a 900 line like the one WCW used a few years ago.

I predict wrestlers will compete with artificial limbs. Men retiring at the age of 33 due to injuries, which happened to Shawn Michaels, will be an extreme rarity. Surgeons will be able implant a new spinal column or maybe a brand-new set of knees, better than the originals. Daredevils like Mankind, by age 40, will be competing with new arms and legs.

The biggest controversy in wrestling will be whether a robo-wrestler division should be established, allowing competitors with enhanced artificial physiques—and corresponding superhuman strength—to wrestle exclusively against each other.

Unscrupulous promoters will start using sophisticated software programs to simulate wrestling matches on TV. Viewers will never be quite sure whether they're watching real or computer-generated wrestling matches.

Due to advances in cryo-technology, Ric Flair will be thawed in the year 2100 to compete for his 25th world title. Shane McMahon III will expand his multimedia empire to include Disney and NBC. At age 155, Terry Funk will announce his retirement, although most will question his sincerity.

Those are my views on the next century. I hope I'm around to see most of it. □

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(Continued from page 21)

nightsticks in their hands. It's ridiculous. If WCW is gonna let Sid shoot his mouth off, they should let him try to back it up."

Prior to Sid's antics, there were only two documented occasions when Goldberg was totally out of control: when The New World Order vandalized his locker room, and after he lost the WCW World title at Starrcade '98 because of Scott Hall's taser.

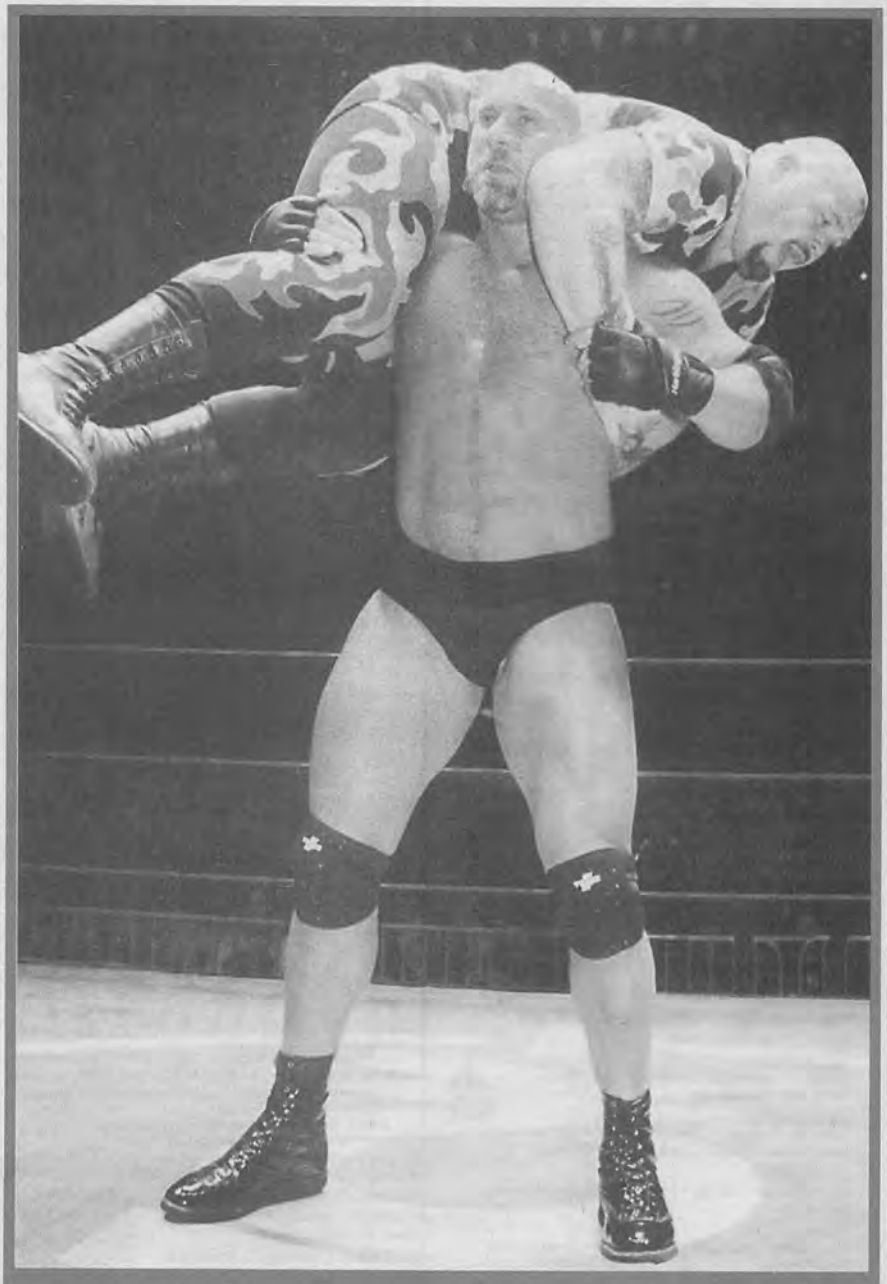
According to members of the backstage crew, Goldberg has gone into a rage a half-dozen times during the last two months. Each time, Sid happened to be on the house mike taunting him.

"I don't think Vicious realizes what he's doing," said WCW commentator Larry Zbyszko. "If Vicious could be in the dressing room area and see how upset Goldberg gets like I've seen, he'd think twice about going on with this farce. Playing a game of human chess is fine, just as long as your opponent doesn't attack you with the chess board!"

Goldberg claims his anger goes beyond Sid's egomaniacal taunts. He's angry because Vicious has gotten away with rewriting history. And not just Goldberg's history: Vicious has been revising his own.

"At last count, Sid claimed he was at 75 wins," Goldberg said. "It's obvious he's just counting bodies, not bustin' his rear to wrestle every night. Everybody is afraid to challenge him on that, including officials like Charles Robinson and some guys at the broadcast table."

Goldberg has been doing his homework. Vicious didn't wrestle 75 times in his first 2½ months in the federation, and he lost several matches at WCW house shows across the country to Sting and even Booker T, among others.



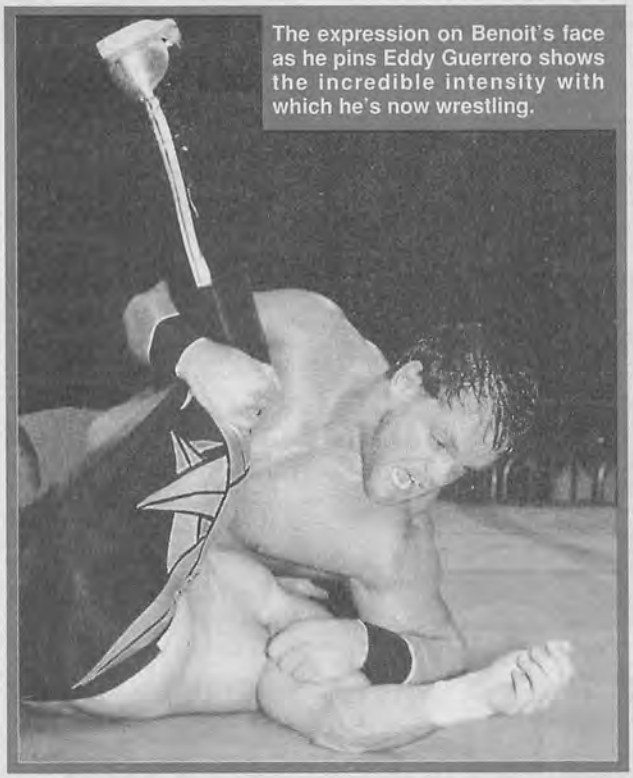
It might not be long before Goldberg does to Vicious what he's already done to Bam Bam Bigelow on numerous occasions!

Vicious has awakened a monster. The next time Goldberg watches a monitor replay of Sid's "Millennium Man" gobbledygook, Vicious should hide behind a door to see his reaction. He should watch the veins pop in Goldberg's neck and take a close look at the hatred in his eyes.

Sid needs to shut up for a while, or he might not make it to the year 2000 at all. □

chris benoit

(Continued from page 34)



The expression on Benoit's face as he pins Eddy Guerrero shows the incredible intensity with which he's now wrestling.

What are Benoit's chances of defeating WCW World champion Hulk Hogan? Right now, the consensus is that his chances are slim. Hogan may be reluctant to defend against Benoit because he has never liked wrestling cruiserweights, believing that big man vs. small man matchups are unfair.

If the match takes place, Hogan might be surprised by Benoit's tenacity. His punches, chops, and stomps in the corner are as vicious as those of any 300-pounder. A graduate of Stu Hart's Dungeon, Benoit has the scientific ability to tie the "Hulkster" into knots.

Would it all be enough to neutralize Hogan's size and power? That's difficult to say. Either way, it's a tantalizing dream match.

"I'm not thinking about Hogan now," said Benoit. "If I don't keep focused on what I'm involved in now, I won't have this U.S. belt around my waist for long. One of my goals is to become the top wrestler in the *'PWI* 500.' That's a goal I can accomplish without being sidetracked. If Dean (Malenko) can be number one, so can I."

Actually, Benoit has a good chance at capturing the top spot next year. He has been ranked in the top 100 since 1992, and reached number 10 in 1997. An impressive U.S. title reign would improve his standing even more.

"I wouldn't bet against Chris Benoit, because there is a precedent for selecting the number-one wrestler based mostly on pure skill," commented Managing Editor Brandi Mankiewicz. "We chose Dean Malenko in 1997, so it's conceivable Benoit could make it to the top spot in the year 2000. Now that would be a real millennium man. Of course, he'll need to develop a more aggressive edge to get my vote."

All-around scientific ability in addition to a U.S. title reign was enough to boost Malenko to number one in '97. It's too early to judge whether that would meet the criteria in 2000. Not to put pressure on Benoit, but a WCW World title win definitely would make him the front-runner.

That would be a successful revolution, indeed. □

With the support of fellow Revolution members Perry Saturn and Dean Malenko, Benoit could grab the number-one spot in next year's *"PWI* 500." A solid U.S. title reign would help his chances tremendously.

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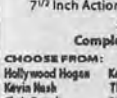

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ringside

(Continued from page 9)

plans nice and good. Now I'm going to go to the WWF and shine under the lights. That's my goal, and now that I have this title, I know I'll be able to do it. All I have to do is get a few minutes of Vince's time."

Good luck there.

After putting up a courageous battle, WCW referee **Brian Hildebrand**, 37, died of stomach cancer on September 8.

Hildebrand was an inspiration to everyone who knew him. Throughout his two-year battle with the disease, Hildebrand never once despaired. No matter how much pain he was in, he always greeted you with a warm smile and a funny story. Cancer might have taken his life, but it certainly did not beat him. "Shooter" didn't allow it to. He will be missed.

Now, fans, before I go, I want to remind you to call the *PWI* Hotline *(see back cover for details)*. **Frank Krewda** and I bring you all the latest scoops from the world of professional wrestling. If you haven't called, you don't know what you're missing. Just this month alone on the Hotline, we broke the news about Raven leaving WCW for ECW. We told you that Taz was going to the WWF before anyone else reported it. And we broke one news story that was so big, we still are not printing it in this magazine. If you called the Hotline, you know what story I'm talking about, but if you didn't, you're out of luck.

I'll see you right here next month, but until then, look for me at ringside and on the Hotline. □

Referee Brian Hildebrand made many friends during his tenure with WCW, but he had a special bond with The Four Horsemen. At a WCW show in November 1998, the Horsemen awarded Hildebrand a replica of the WCW World title. Hildebrand died of cancer in September.

(Continued from page 4)

athletic wrestlers to compete in main events. The WWF's success is more about action and intensity than it is about ho-downs and extended middle fingers. Just flip back and forth between *Raw* and *Nitro* from 10:45 to 11 o'clock. The difference is often astounding. How can Busch get that same kind of energy from his wrestlers? The first step is using the wrestlers who are willing—and physically capable—to expend it.

Busch, who has been around WCW for 10 years, has to find a way for the wrestlers to personalize the success and failures of the company and lose the attitude that Time Warner will keep the checks coming regardless of what the ratings are. The WWF, its plans for a public stock offering notwithstanding, is a family business. While the McMahons are obviously not afraid to invest in their business, there isn't a wasted motion or dollar in Titan Towers. Every person who works for the WWF, be it in the office or in the ring, has a very definite role in the company's business model. Chris Jericho makes that point in the insightful interview he gave our Will Welsh in this issue.

Eric Bischoff

Do WCW wrestlers care about the overall well-being of the company? Some do. Others care only about their position within the company. When it comes to making personal sacrifices on behalf of the company, WWF wrestlers, who feel they have a stake in the company's future (and will have a more tangible stake when the company goes public), are going to be a lot more compliant.

Big changes will be needed in WCW to get things moving in the proper direction and stave off the momentum of the competition. If Busch can make an immediate impact on the psyche of the company, that feeling could carry over to the finished product. Busch is 35 and a lot less experienced in this business than many of the people who work for him. He'll doubtlessly be hit with advice from all sides, and he'd be wise to listen carefully to all of it before he makes his decisions. But there is one man whose council I recommend he seeks, and that's Eric Bischoff. He may have had his failures, but he achieved success that no other man in his position was able to. Busch may even find that he's not as arrogant as he used to be.

Just give him a few weeks. He needs the rest.

Stu Saks
Publisher

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(Continued from page 25)

While Jericho and Eddy Guerrero did wrestle a few matches as a team, Jericho calls the duo "the best tag team there never was." Their styles mesh extremely well, and both have extensive international experience.

was Dallas Page, and he deserves to be there, but there's a lot of other guys that deserve to be there who don't have the same political connections. Goldberg did it, but right from the bat I think they knew there was something special about him, and there is. But, Shane Douglas, I'd love to see him come in and really make a difference. I think he'll be with the new Four Horsemen, maybe feud with Flair, but I don't think you'll see him make too many more inroads than that, even though he has all the potential and all the reason to be there—as does Chris Benoit and a bunch of other guys.

WELSH: I remember from a *Nitro* some months back, where Flair was verbally ripping on Hogan, and he brought your name up. He said something to the effect of, "Who do you think Chris Jericho was watching while he was growing up, me or you?" Do you consider that remark a compliment?

JERICHO: Yeah, I do feel it was a compliment. I take it as a compliment. Flair told me before that he really respected what I've done so far, and I really respect him. I take it as a compliment, but I also take it as far as it went. All the time that I was there, I never really had a chance to work with Flair all that much. I asked many times if I could, but it never came through. And once again, it's another missed opportunity. I would've loved to have been working with Flair, either against him or as a tag team partner with him. I think it would have been a great tag team, and I could have learned what he knows. That's why I would have wanted to work with him. I wanna know what he knows so I can carry on what he knows into the future. But it never happened, and I think it was a missed opportunity. But I do take it as a definite compliment, because whenever somebody that credible or that legendary and that excellent would say something like that, of course it's a compliment.

WELSH: Will you remember your time in WCW fondly in the future?

JERICHO: No doubt about it. I have no regrets with WCW. I had a great time there, and I thank Eric Bischoff profusely for allowing me to be there and giving me a chance to do what I can do and show what I can show. Like I said, sometimes, especially in this business, you know when it's time to move on, and I just really thought that it was time for me to move on—not necessarily forever, but for now. I love WCW. I still claim it has the best talent in the world. WCW's roster destroys the WWF's roster. They just don't know how to use the guys to the top of their potential.

WELSH: Did you meet the expectations that you had for yourself when you first signed with WCW?

JERICHO: The first year-and-a-

half for me in WCW was a waste of time. I never got a chance to really do anything. I never had a chance to really show much. Sure, I had good matches, but as far as characters and stuff, there was probably about a whole year where I was just a guy there. And that's fine, but that's not really where I saw myself. Because anywhere before that, any company that I had ever been in, I had been a major player. Whenever something needed to be done, I was the guy they went to. It wouldn't matter what it was. And in WCW, when I first got there, it was a big pool, a big pond—there's no doubt about it—but I don't really feel that I was given a real chance until the beginning of '98, after I turned bad, which is what I wanted to do in the first place, because I knew I could do it. When they finally gave me the chance, I took it and I did the best I could with it, and I think at the end of that run, I think I was ready to move up, to wrestle against all the guys that are there. But that was never really given a chance. I mean, I wrestled the same guys in my very last match that I worked with in my first match there.

WELSH: Talk about your last match. I heard that Eddy Guerrero, Billy Kidman, and Rey Misterio Jr. gave you quite a sendoff.

JERICHO: It was a good time. We were kinda laughing about it, 'cause it was like that famous moment in Madison Square Garden with The Kliq. We were saying Peoria, Illinois, is the next best place. It was fun. More than anything it was fun to go out there and just rock it, like only a few guys can. We wrestled about a 30-minute match and we ripped it up, and it was very easy. Those guys are some of the best in the world. I think me and Eddy Guerrero were the best tag team that never was. We were never given a real tag team chance. For whatever reasons, they never put us together, but there's not too many people in the world right now that can be a tag team like me and Eddy Guerrero can. And we had a great time, and afterward, there was a little bit of a sendoff, and we kind of broke through the walls that are always there. You know, it was fun because Kidman said that it was my last match in WCW, and thanks for three years of great entertainment. Everyone in the crowd starting chanting my name and then I said, "Well, you know, after everyone's chanting my name, and it's such an emotional moment, only one thing comes to mind—Peoria sucks." I got my boos back and walked out. It was a lot of fun. I'll never forget it. We had a really good time, and again, I have a lot of friends in WCW. That made it a little harder, but I've done it many times before. I've left many companies before, and you leave a lot of friends behind, but it's a very small business, and you always seem to run into those guys again and again.

WELSH: Do you regret leaving at all?

JERICHO: No, I don't have any regrets leaving. I'm sad to leave—there's no doubt about that. I'm sad because I have a lot of good friends there. I'm basically friends with everybody in WCW. At least I think I am. From the boys in the back, to the crew members, to the ring crew, to the lighting guys, to the management. It's always sad to leave.

One thing that Jericho likes about the WWF is how diligently it will work to find the proper persona for each wrestler. Jericho cites Bob Holly as an example. He went through many failed gimmicks before he became Hardcore Holly.

But I don't have any regrets, because the WWF is the best place for me to be at this point in time. I've always wanted to work for the WWF. When I was growing up in Canada, that's what we watched: the WWF and Stampede Wrestling. I regret that I never got a chance to really expand and be a tag team with Eddy Guerrero. I regret that I didn't have a long-term program with Chris Benoit, a long-term program with Ric Flair. But those aren't really regrets. They're just kinda, "I wish." I don't have any regrets. I'm looking forward to it and I had to do it. I've known that I had to do this for the last year.

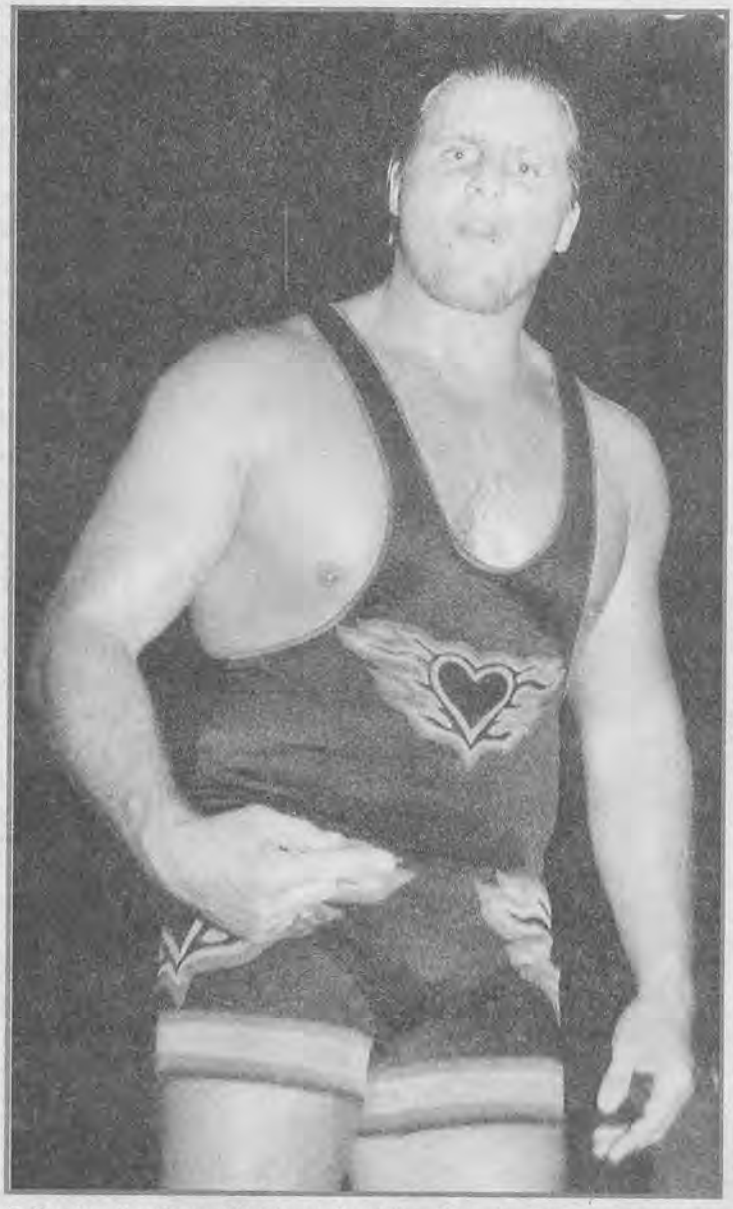
WELSH: What was Eric Bischoff like when you told him of your final decision?

JERICHO: I never really did tell him. Basically what happened was, Eric and I didn't see eye-to-eye for the last six months that I was there. We barely even talked. Toward the end we had a few discussions, and I'm glad that we did, because it kind of cleared the air. But I haven't talked to him since. I haven't talked to him at all. I'm sure he kinda wishes I didn't go, but I'm sure he doesn't see it as a big deal. That's kinda the attitude that I got from him, and I'm sure he'd tell you the same. I'm not saying that's the way he should feel, but I think that's the way he does feel.

WELSH: Why do you think he feels that way?

JERICHO: I don't really know. I just think that it goes back to the position that you came into the company. I just don't think he sees me as a real big-time player in WCW. And that's fine. Like I said, I have no problem with that. Maybe he does. I shouldn't put words in his mouth. But there's a few guys there that for whatever reasons don't seem to get the big shot they deserve, and maybe they'll get it soon. But Bischoff does a good job. He really turned around a kind of struggling company and made it what it is today. It's still a big money-making company. I have no complaints. There's nothing bad that I can say about anybody there, as much as I'm sure that's what people want to read about, but I honestly can't. I can't make anything up, because like I said, I don't really have any problems with anybody there.

WELSH: During your time off with your ankle injury earlier this year, you said that you had a chance to notice things different about the companies, and although at the time you didn't say which side you were leaning to, *Nitro* was probably at one of its lowest points ever. What differences were you noticing between the two Monday shows?



Following the Owen Hart tragedy at the Over the Edge pay-per-view on May 23, the WWF took heavy criticism. Jericho's take on the situation is simple: "Everybody is wrong, nobody is right, because Owen Hart died."

JERICHO: Basically, that there were reasons why *Nitro* was a boring show, and mostly the reason for that was because there was a lot of recycling going on. It was almost like nobody really cared. For whatever reasons, the show was just very stale, no real new ideas. And I have a certain crew of guys that are my favorites to watch, as I'm sure everybody does, and I wasn't seeing the guys that I really liked on the show, or if they were there, not really contributing at all. Like I said, I'm a 28-year-old kid—not kid—I'm a 28-year-old man now, and there's certain guys that are on the show that I just see, and I'm like, *These guys don't need to be on there any-*

more. I'm not going to mention any names, but it's not hard to figure out. And when you see that, I mean, I like Megadeth—they're one of my favorite bands—but when I'm watching a wrestling show and I see Megadeth on at a quarter to 11 at night, and the WWF has "Triple-H" vs. The Rock in a cage, I'm going to watch the cage match, 'cause I wanna see it. And once again, I notice that everybody on the WWF show, no matter who it is, has a role and has a reason to be on TV. And if somebody doesn't get over one way, change the gimmick, change the gimmick, change the gimmick. Look at the "Big Shot" Bob Holly. That guy's had about 12 gimmicks and he's finally got one that's entertaining. They made Bob Holly into an entertaining character. And that's what the WWF does, because they *have* to do that. Every single person on their roster has to contribute, no matter if it's a main-eventer or an opening match guy. They all have a reason, they all have a story, they all have promo time. It might not be a lot, but they all have a reason to be on there, and personally, that's the way I think it should be. They're all characters on a show and they all have a part.

WELSH: Did the Owen Hart tragedy affect your decision-making in any way?

JERICHO: It affected me a lot. Sure it did. He was a big inspiration for why I got into the business in the first place. A well-respected guy, both personally and professionally. First of all, after it happened, I didn't want to be in the business anymore, never mind WWF or WCW. I was just sick of the whole thing and sick of the way that everybody treated it. And sure, Vince McMahon made some mistakes, and he made some right decisions. But the way I see it, I don't really care about petty things like there's a tribute show, or they didn't stop the show. Sure, there's a lot of rights and wrongs and what-ifs, could-haves, but it doesn't change the fact that a really good guy died. It was senseless, but this happens all the time, as far as guys repelling down. As soon as it happened, I was watching the American Music Awards and I see *N Sync, or whatever, coming down from the ceiling on cables. Or you go to Kiss, and Paul Stanley is flying above the crowd. That's just a part of entertainment. That's what wrestling is—entertainment. Somebody made a mistake, whether it wasn't proper safety, whether somebody screwed up, I don't know, and I really don't care. He died, and that's the most important thing. People forget about that. And yet the WWF made a lot of mistakes. That's the wrestling business; there's a lot of exploitation going on. WCW made a lot of mistakes about it as well, and any way you slice it, everybody is wrong, and nobody is right,

The WWF has an abundance of wrestlers who are good on the microphone, so Jericho is going to have to work to make his interviews stand out. It will be a challenge, but one he hopes will make him even better.

because Owen Hart died.

WELSH: When the tragedy happened, the WWF received a lot of criticism for pushing the edge. Not really in reference to what happened with Owen, but are you comfortable with the WWF's product, working under it and working in it?

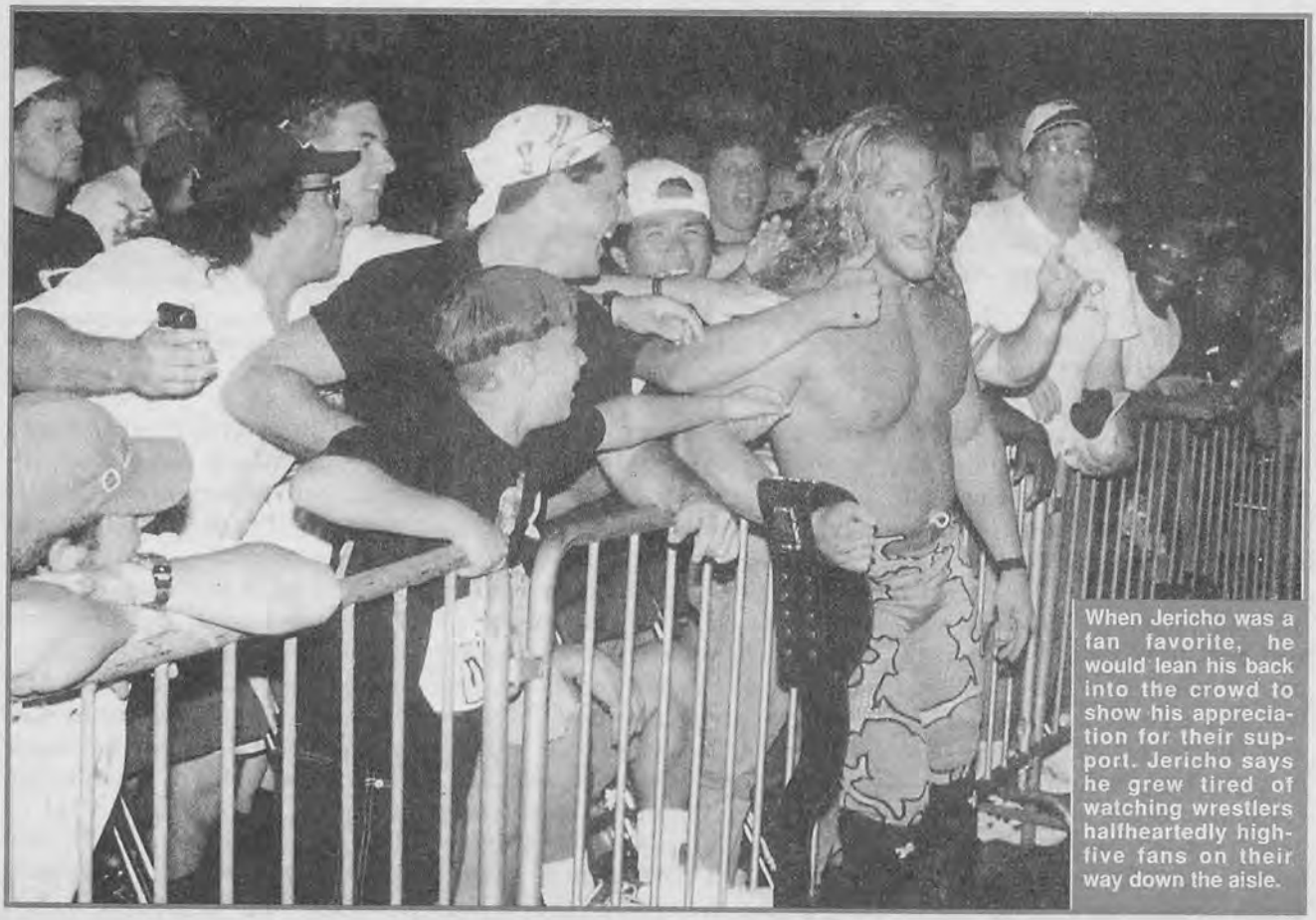
JERICHO: I don't like some of the stuff that the WWF does. I think it's unnecessary, but the reason why they do that is because that's what the people like to see. They're just mirroring society. They always have. I disagree with some of it, but that doesn't mean that I have to participate in it, and I won't. I mean, I don't like some of the things that happen in the world, but I still live in it. That's the way I see it. And there's a lot of raunchy stuff and a lot of stuff that really isn't all that tasteful, but once again, it's still the best wrestling show on TV. That's the bottom line. It really is. And yeah, some of the stuff the WWF does is kinda wrong, but WCW is no better. They portray themselves as the G-rated promotion, but that's not true, either. You can watch the show and you can see. It's not as bad, but there's a lot of stuff on there. So either way, it's the nature of the business.

WELSH: How do you see yourself there? Do you see yourself getting any edgier with your character?

JERICHO: I see maybe getting a little bit more the way I was back in Japan, more kick-ass. Still entertaining, but a little bit less comical. I don't really know. I have to wait to see when I get there. As far as swearing, I don't need to swear. I'm like a Jerry Seinfeld or a Bill Cosby kind of comedian compared to an Eddie Murphy or a Chris Rock. I don't have to swear to go out there and get my point across. I'm too smart for that. But the sexual things? There's always a little bit of sexual stuff involved in wrestling, with valets and everything, but once again, I don't need to go out there with a really hot girl, 'cause I don't need that, either. So, you know, other than that, what else is there? There's a few risque things that are on the show, but I was also the one who started an angle over a guy's dead father last year. So some of it doesn't bother me.

WELSH: How do you feel about the comparison to Shawn Michaels?

JERICHO: Once again, when we were talking about Ric Flair, I think that Shawn Michaels, for my generation, is my favorite wrestler, and I think he's the greatest wrestler of all-time. He's everything that I always liked to watch and he's everything that I wanted to be, so to be compared



When Jericho was a fan favorite, he would lean his back into the crowd to show his appreciation for their support. Jericho says he grew tired of watching wrestlers halfheartedly high-five fans on their way down the aisle.

to him is great. If people think that I'm going to go to the WWF and be a Shawn Michaels ripoff, absolutely not. There's not a chance of that. And once again, if he ever wanted to have one last match or if he would ever come back, I'd be the first in line to challenge him, because that was another one of those things that I've always wanted to do, work against him. And I think that we could really rip it up as well.

WELSH: What are your other expectations going in?

JERICHO: Well, I don't really have any expectations. I just plan on going there and completely dominating. Really prove what I can do. And if I'm given half the shot, there's no reason why I won't. There's a lot of good guys there, but I think I'm just as good as all of them. A lot of experienced wrestlers there, but I've had just as much experience as all of them in a lot of different companies and countries. Charisma-wise, same thing. Interview-wise—that was one thing about WCW—interview-wise, I was probably one of the best there. In the WWF, it's going be a little bit harder, but that's good. It will challenge me to get better, 'cause maybe I was getting a little complacent there, so I'm looking forward to it. I'm expecting to go there and be pushed to the limits and prove just how much I can contribute and how much I have to offer.

WELSH: What do you think people like about Chris Jericho?

JERICHO: Just that I'm entertaining. My character is entertaining. I think that's why people enjoy me. They know that I'll say whatever I have to say to entertain. And plus, when I'm in the ring, I back it up. But I think wrestling is entertainment, and above all else, I think Chris Jericho is a very entertaining character, and that's why people like it.

WELSH: So you agree with the term "sports entertainment" then?

JERICHO: One-hundred percent. And there are some old-timers that might not agree, but wrestling has always been sports entertainment. Twenty years ago it was an entertaining sport with the angles and the characters and the personalities. Now it's changed a bit. I mean, if I had my way, a two-minute, three-minute match—I don't like those. But that's the way that the business has mutated and progressed, and you either go along with it and benefit from it and learn it, or you kind of get left behind. Like I said, I love wrestling. I'd love to go out there and do a 20-minute, 30-minute match, and not too many people can do that, because a lot of new guys who come into the business haven't had the experience of doing that. They don't know any better. They think that a five-minute match is all that there is to it. That's one thing that I have to my advantage. I know how to do a 30-minute match and I can do them when the time is right. And also, like we said, it's so character-driven now, and acting and personalities, I can do all that as well. So, sure, I'd like to go out there and wrestle longer, but if it means taking less bumps and having a longer career, I'd rather go out there and do a 10-minute promo instead.

WELSH: Are you the future of the sport?

JERICHO: Most definitely. Like I said, there are a handful of guys that understand what it takes to keep people watching. It's entertainment. It doesn't matter if you look stupid. It's all entertaining the fans and having them tune in. It's like going to a rock 'n' roll concert. If you go to a Kiss show, you're always going to enjoy it, whether you like the music or not. If you go see an Aerosmith

(Continued on page 60)

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(Continued from page 59)

show, you might not, because they don't really do much but stand there and play their songs. If you're having fun, the people are gonna have fun. If you're enjoying yourself, the people are going to enjoy themselves. And not a lot of guys understand that. It doesn't matter who the toughest guy is anymore. People don't care about that anymore. They could really care less. All that matters is whether they're entertained or not.

WELSH: Did you ever imagine that you would be the focal point of such intense scrutiny? On the Internet you've been the talk of wrestling for the past six months, even though you were barely on TV. Did you ever imagine the day that that would happen?

Jericho wishes Paul Heyman and ECW all the luck in the world with their new show on TNN. He even says that he hopes the renegade organization surpasses both the WWF and WCW and becomes number one. He had a good reason for saying that.

JERICHO: No, I never imagined that. I never intended it to be that way, but it turned out that way, and I guess that it just shows how much of a touch I have on the sport. I mean, I got countless e-mails from people who took Chris Jericho signs to the WCW shows and said they were confiscated. All I want to do is get back and start contributing and be a part of the show again, do what I do best, which is entertaining all of the Jerichoholics who want to check me out. And I guess that there are more of them out there than people thought there were.

WELSH: What do you think created a bond with the fans like that?

JERICHO: I don't know. I'm still a fan, and I'm a fan of many things. I'm still a fan of wrestling, I'm a fan of music, I'm a fan of hockey. And I think that kind of rubs off to the people that know that I'm sincere when I say certain things. I don't think I'm the coolest guy on the block, I don't think that I'm the toughest guy on the block, and there's a lot of guys that come off with that kind of attitude in any kind of entertainment. And I don't see it that way. I'm just a guy doing my job, just like Joe Smith down the street is doing his job working at Harry's Burgers, or just like you're doing your job interviewing me right now. It's just a job, and some people forget that you're playing a character when you're in the ring, and outside the ring, you don't have that character, but some guys don't discern that. Some guys live the character 24 hours a day, and I don't think that's healthy. And the people know that. That's why when I first started in WCW, instead of slapping hands, I used to lean back in the crowd. I wasn't trying to do anything, just something different because I was sick of seeing wrestlers walk to the ring shaking hands with this scowl on their face. You knew that they didn't want to do it, but they just did it because that's what they're supposed to do. And I was like, "That's garbage. That shouldn't be that way." And I was just trying to do something different and kinda say, "I do want to be out

here, and I am excited to be out here, and I'm not just doing this because I'm supposed to do it." On the other side of the coin, turning my trick into becoming a bad guy, my only mission out there is that every single person hate me and not like me at all. But in a weird sort of way, that means that they do like me, because that means they want to see me out there so they can yell at me.

WELSH: What would you say to the fans in the WWF who don't really know what Chris Jericho is about, or what being a Jerichoholic is all about? What can they expect from you?

JERICHO: All they have to do is watch the show and they'll see what it's all about. I know that there are a lot of people that haven't seen me before, and that I'm basically starting from scratch, but I like that. I like the challenge of it. And there's not too many people that are as entertaining as Chris Jericho's character on TV—and I can back it up in the ring. That's not being an egomaniac. That's just watching the shows and seeing what I see. So I'm looking forward to it. I'm looking forward to stirring up some trouble and causing some trouble, just like I did before, but doing it at a bigger level with the so-called bigger names and bigger stars. It's gonna make a bigger difference.

WELSH: And what about the fans who have supported you throughout? Do you have anything to say to them?

JERICHO: Well, obviously you want to say thanks, because there's a reason why they supported me. Wrestling fans are very loyal, but they have also seen a lot of different guys and a lot of different situations. They know what they like and they know what entertains them. That's the reason they stuck with me and that's the reason why they'll probably continue to stick with me, because they know that I can back up what I do, that I'm out there to entertain and to make it worth their while to watch the show, so when they finish watching the show, they don't think, *That was a waste of time. I shouldn't haven't even bothered staying in.*

WELSH: Do you really think you're starting off fresh, though?

JERICHO: No, it's not like I'm staring from scratch like the first time I appeared in a WCW ring. There's a definite buzz there, and people do know who I am. But there's also a lot of people, especially right now—if you look at *Raw's* ratings, they almost triple WCW's. So that's like a big thing of the wrestling world that probably doesn't even watch WCW. They might know who I am from a friend, or maybe they've seen me once or twice, but they don't know my whole history. They don't know all the stories that I've done or all the angles that I've done and all the situations that I've been in. That's what I mean by starting fresh—I'm going to have to start a whole new history. WCW fans know the history of Chris Jericho. WWF fans might not know the history of Chris Jericho.

WELSH: Did you talk with ECW at all?

JERICHO: Yeah, I'm still good friends with Paul E. I talked with them a bit, and if I would've had a month or two months between contracts, I would have gladly gone there and had some fun. But it just so happened that one contract started just as the other one ended, so I didn't really have the time. But I'm really excited for them to be on TNN. It's going to be great for them, and it also makes it great for me. It gives me one more place to go. I hope they go there and beat both companies, 'cause then it's going to make both companies pull up their socks and it's also going to mean a better place for me to go if I need a place to go. □

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the JAPAN REPORT

By Mike Spillane

THE TREND OF bad luck continues for **Toshiaki Kawada** without interruption. Now the former All-Japan Triple Crown champion is faced with eye surgery that might keep him on the sidelines for up to four months. Kawada, who returned from a broken arm in May, managed to work his way back into contention and was poised to face **Vader** for the first time at an All-Japan Pro Wrestling card this summer. Due to vision problems, however, Kawada had to withdraw from the match.

Another key news item from All-Japan involves the breakup of the unified tag team titles. **Mitsuharu Misawa** and **Yoshinari Ogawa** recently won the straps, then effectively broke them back into the AJPW All-Asian tag title and the International tag title. At a press conference, Misawa announced that his decision to split the titles was part of an effort to foster more competition in the tag team ranks.

New Japan Pro Wrestling, with considerable difficulty, put on its summer-ending Jingyu Stadium show, featuring the no-rope barbed-wire barricade-mat electric-land mine double-hell death match between **The Great Muta (Keiji Muto)** and **Great Nita**. Great Nita is the alter ego of **Atsushi Onita**, who originally donned the face paint as an insult to Muta. Since Onita's arrival in New Japan, fans have clamored for Onita to don the paint once again and become The Great Nita one last time. The two did meet in a match that favored Onita's style, but it was Muta who emerged victorious.

Toshiaki Kawada, who must undergo surgery to correct problems with his vision, was recently forced to pull out of an important match against Vader in All-Japan.

One of the things that made putting this show together so difficult was the search for a suitable opponent for **Kensuke Sasaki**. At first, New Japan President **Tatsumi Fujinami** set his sights on WCW star **Bill Goldberg**. Fujinami even flew to the United States to personally procure his services. WCW would not allow Goldberg to appear, but did grant New Japan permission to use **Hulk Hogan**. This did not please New Japan officials or Hogan, so the deal was nullified. Determined to get a top name to challenge Sasaki, New Japan sought out **Nobuhiko Takada**, whose previous matches for the company against **Shinya Hashimoto** drew some of the largest gates in the history of the sport.

Promoters felt certain that Takada had the necessary star power to fill the spot intended for Goldberg. The press in Japan was quick to cover this story, which broke just a few weeks before the show. Much of the buzz concerned the exorbitant sum of money New Japan agreed to pay to Takada to appear. New Japan officials did not consider Takada a risky investment, however, since they felt he commanded an audience that would justify his price.

Then, just days before the card, New Japan announced that Takada had pulled himself out of the match. His agents declared that no agreement had ever been reached. While the two camps argued and the controversy swelled, the Jingyu Stadium show came and went—and did not feature a Sasaki match.

One man unaffected by all of the controversy was catapulted to a new level at this card. The 1999 "Best Of The Super Junior" tournament winner, **Kendo Ka Shin**, defeated **Koji Kanemoto** to win his first IWGP junior heavyweight title. This came as a huge surprise, even though it was Kanemoto whom Ka Shin pinned in order to win the "Best Of The Super Junior." Many fans considered that a fluke victory. While Ka Shin has now had some success against top juniors such as Kanemoto and **Shinjiro Otani**, he has yet to hold his own against junior heavyweight kingpin **Jushin Liger**, who anxiously awaits a rematch. The unpredictable Ka Shin, who is anything but a fan favorite, will no doubt have to face Liger in the near future.

Soo da, sayonara! □

the MEXICO REPORT

By John Molinaro

PSICOSIS hasn't had many high-profile matches in WCW during the last few years, but he competed in what was billed as the Match of the *Century* at Tijuana's Auditorio Municipal on August 26. It was a mask vs. hair match in which he did battle with the man who trained him (as well as **Rey Misterio Jr.** and **Konnan**), **Rey Misterio Sr.** The fabled arena maintained its reputation as "The Graveyard Of Masks" as Misterio Sr. beat Psicosis in a incredible brawl that saw Psicosis unmask in the end.

Not to be outdone, EMLL held a mask vs. mask match between **Mr. Niebla** and **Mr. Niebla II**, a wrestler from the Grupo Revolucion promotion, on August 20.

Niebla II and a host of wrestlers from Grupo Revolucion had invaded EMLL and attacked such stars as **El Hijo del Santo** and **Negro Casas**, but they focused their malice on Mr. Niebla. The two Nieblas squared off in an epic match before a sellout crowd of 16,000 fans at Arena Mexico in Mexico City.

The bloody battle came to an end when Mr. Niebla scored the submission victory. As a result, Mr. Niebla II was forced to unmask and may no longer use the Mr. Niebla name. He was revealed as **Miguel Angel** and will now wrestle as **Mr. Mexico**.

On the undercard, **Gigante Silva**, **Brazo de Plata**, and **Emilio Charles Jr.** beat **Gigante Kurrgan**, **Apolo Dantes**, **Cien Caras**, and **Mascara Ano 2000** in a handicap match. CMLL heavyweight champ **Rayo de Jalisco Jr.** made an appearance and helped the *technicos* fend off the *rudos'* post-match attack.

Jalisco has been out of action for several months with a neck injury, but he was tentatively scheduled to return to the ring in October.

In other EMLL news: This year's International Grand Prix tournament has been pushed back until November ... CMLL wrestlers embarked on a recent tour of Japan that saw **Mil Mascaras** make his first appearance in the island nation in years. The biggest development of the tour came on August 10 in Kawasaki, when **Arkangel** defeated Michinoku Pro Wrestling star **Super Delphin** to capture the CMLL welterweight title ... **Atlantis** retained his CMLL light heavyweight title against rival **Villano II** in Mexico City on August 3 ... Negro Casas and **Tinieblas Jr.** won a one-night tag team tournament on August 8 in Mexico City's Arena Coliseo, defeating Gigante Kurrgan and Mascara Ano 2000 in the finals.

In AAA news, grizzled veteran **Mocho Cota** has made his debut in the promotion ... **Latin Lover** won the Champion of Champions crown from Cibernetico on July 30 in Tijuana ... **Electro Shock** and **Abismo Negro II** retained the Mexican National tag title against **Psicosis II** and **Cibernetico** on August 22 in Morelia ... The AAA *rudo* group **Los Vipers** has split into two feuding cliques. Abismo Negro II, Electro Shock, **Pentagon**, and **El Curevo** make up **Los Extremists**, while **La Prima Clase** is comprised of Cibernetico, Psicosis II, **Maniaco**, **Mosco II**, and **Histeria II**. □

Although he still wrestles with a mask in WCW, Psicosis will have to wear a towel over his head if he wants to hide his identity in Mexico. He lost his mask in a match with Rey Misterio Sr. on August 26.

PRO Wrestling ILLUSTRATED

TOP 10

1. **STING**
   260, Venice Beach, CA
   (-) WCW World champion
2. **HUNTER HEARST HELMSLEY**
   279, Greenwich, CT
   (7) No. 2 contender: WWF World title
3. **HULK HOGAN**
   275, Venice Beach, CA
   (1) No. 2 contender: WCW World title
4. **MITSUHARU MISAWA**
   228, Ashikaga, Japan
   (6) All-Japan Triple Crown champion
5. **SID VICIOUS**
   318, West Memphis, AR
   (8) WCW U.S. champion
6. **JEFF JARRETT**
   230, Nashville, TN
   (-) WWF Intercontinental champion
7. **TAZ**
   248, Red Hook, NY
   (3) ECW World champion
8. **THE ROCK**
   272, Miami, FL
   (9) No. 3 contender: WWF World title
9. **BILL GOLDBERG**
   270, Tulsa, OK
   (10) No. 3 contender: WCW World title
10. **KEIJI MUTO**
    245, Yamanashi, Japan
    (-) IWGP heavyweight champion

Jeff Jarrett

TAG TEAMS

1. **HARLEM HEAT**
   Combined weight: 515 pounds
   (4) WCW World tag team champions
2. **TOMMY DREAMER & RAVEN**
   Combined weight: 480 pounds
   (-) ECW World tag team champions
3. **THE UNDERTAKER & PAUL WIGHT**
   Combined weight: 828 pounds
   (-) WWF World tag team champions
4. **MITSUHARU MISAWA & YOSHINARI OGAWA**
   Combined weight: 430 pounds
   (-) All-Japan International tag team champions
5. **BARRY & KENDALL WINDHAM**
   Combined weight: 493 pounds
   (-) No. 1 contenders: WCW World tag title
6. **THE ROCK & MANKIND**
   Combined weight: 549 pounds
   (-) No. 1 contenders: WWF World tag title
7. **YUJI NAGATA & MANABU NAKANISHI**
   Combined weight: 455 pounds
   (-) IWGP International tag team champions
8. **CHRISTIAN & EDGE**
   Combined weight: 465 pounds
   (7) No. 2 contenders: WWF World tag title
9. **SHANE DOUGLAS & DEAN MALENKO**
   Combined weight: 465 pounds
   (-) No. 2 contenders: WCW World tag title
10. **BRADSHAW & FAAROOQ**
    Combined weight: 600 pounds
    (5) No. 3 contenders: WWF World tag title

WCW

World Champion:
STING
(6) 260, Venice Beach, CA

1—SID VICIOUS
(2) 318, West Memphis, AR
2—HULK HOGAN
(C) 275, Venice Beach, CA
3—BILL GOLDBERG
(3) 270, Tulsa, OK
4—CHRIS BENOIT
(1) 218, Edmonton, Alberta
5—LENNY LANE
(-) 212, Hibbings, MN
6—PERRY SATURN
(-) 234, Boston, MA
7—DIAMOND DALLAS PAGE
(8) 260, Tampa, FL
8—RICK STEINER
(7) 248, Detroit, MI
9—BRET HART
(-) 235, Calgary, Alberta
10—BERLYN
(-) 222, Berlin, Germany

WWF

World Champion:
VINCE McMAHON
(-) 253, Greenwich, CT

1—JEFF JARRETT
(6) 230, Nashville, TN
2—HUNTER HEARST HELMSLEY
(2) 279, Greenwich, CT
3—THE ROCK
(3) 272, Miami, FL
4—MANKIND
(-) 277, Truth or Consequences, NM
5—BIG BOSSMAN
(10) 310, Cobb County, GA
6—KANE
(-) 345, parts unknown
7—X-PAC
(-) 212, Minneapolis, MN
8—BILLY GUNN
(8) 256, Austin, TX
9—TEST
(-) 302, Toronto, Ontario
10—STEVE BLACKMAN
(7) 245, Annville, PA

ECW

World Champion:
TAZ
(C) 248, Red Hook, NY

1—ROB VAN DAM
(1) 237, Battle Creek, MI
2—JERRY LYNN
(5) 214, Minneapolis, MN
3—YOSHIHIRO TAJIRI
(2) 224, Tokyo, Japan
4—SUPER CRAZY
(3) 172, Mexico City, Mexico
5—MASATO TANAKA
(-) 235, Tokyo, Japan
6—SABU
(4) 225, Bombay
7—LITTLE GUIDO
(7) 221, Howard Beach, NY
8—LANCE STORM
(6) 234, Calgary, Alberta
9—JUSTIN CREDIBLE
(8) 225, Waterbury, CT
10—UGANDA
(-) 401, Uganda

NWA

NWA Champion:
NAOYA OGAWA
(C) 286, Tokyo, Japan

1—GARY STEELE
(1) 241, London, England
2—BIGGIE BIGGS
(-) 303, Perth Amboy, NJ
3—BART SAWYER
(3) 231, Portland, OR
4—COLORADO KID
(4) 231, Colorado Springs, CO
5—BRIAN ANTHONY
(8) 220, Pittsburgh, PA
6—DOUG GILBERT
(2) 241, Lexington, TN
7—KNUCKLES NELSON
(10) 225, Reno, NV
8—REDD DOGG BEGNAUD
(-) 258, Dallas, TX
9—MICHELLE STARR
(5) 265, Vancouver, British Columbia
10—DAN SEVERN
(6) 265, Detroit, MI

OFFICIAL RATINGS

Top 10 and Tag Team ratings are based on won-lost records for the past month, quality of opposition, and inherent skill of each wrestler or team. These ratings are compiled by the magazine's editorial board. All other ratings are based on the official current positions of challengers to the top title in each category; certain titleholders receive an automatic spot in the ratings. The number in parentheses indicates a wrestler's position in that category last issue; (-) indicates that the wrestler was not rated in that category last issue. while (C) indicates the wrestler was champion in that category last issue.

For period ended September 15, 1999

AMERICAN INDEPENDENT WRESTLING FEDERATION: Champion—Terminator X; 1—Chainz; 2—Rocky Steelheart; 3—Lamont Steele; 4—Rick Deezel; 5—Sweet Daddy; 6—Robbie Evil; 7—Brian Danzig; 8—James Manson; 9—Steve Niles; 10—Easy Rider.

EAST COAST WRESTLING ASSOCIATION: Champion—Christian Cage; 1—Cheetah Master; 2—Mr. Ooh La La; 3—Glen Osbourne; 4—Viper; 5—Reckless Youth; 6—Ace Darling; 7—Mark Shrader; 8—Boogie Woogie Brown; 9—J.J. The Ring Crew Guy; 10—Jeff Peterson.

FRONTIER MARTIAL ARTS WRESTLING: Champion—H; 1—Masato Tanaka; 2—Kodo Fuyuki; 3—Mr. Gannosuke; 4—Hisakatsu Oya; 5—Tetsuhiro Kuroda; 6—Gedo; 7—Jado; 8—Koji Nakagawa; 9—Yukihiro Kanemura; 10—Ricky Fuji.

MARYLAND CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING: Champion—Bruiser; 1—Tom Brandi; 2—Julio Sanchez; 3—Headbanger Mosh; 4—King Kong Bundy; 5—Romeo Valentino; 6—Max Muscle; 7—Danny Rose; 8—Jimmy Cicero; 9—Gillberg; 10—Corporal Punishment.

MICHINOKU PRO WRESTLING: Champion—Great Sasuke; 1—Tiger Mask; 2—Dos Caras; 3—Gran Hamada; 4—Jinsei Shinzaki; 5—Men's Teoh; 6—Tokyo Magnum; 7—Sasuke the Great; 8—Masaaki Mochizuki; 9—Mikiko Futagami; 10—Judo Suwa.

NORTH AMERICAN WRESTLING ALLIANCE: Champion—Shane Hooker; 1—Intimidator; 2—Bob Ozark; 3—Dorty Reid; 4—Big Willie; 5—Mad Dog Grant; 6—Damian Thunder; 7—El Gato; 8—Dustin Daniels; 9—Gino Blanchard; 10—Mr. X.

NWA GEORGIA: Champion—Bart Sawyer; 1—Rick Michaels; 2—David Young; 3—Dusty Dotson; 4—Joel Deaton; 5—Frenchy Riviera; 6—Air Paris; 7—T.J. Gray; 8—Faku; 9—Rukkus; 10—A.J. Styles.

NWA WORLDWIDE: Champion—Colorado Kid; 1—Chris Michaels; 2—Bart Sawyer; 3—Ron Harris; 4—Cory Williams; 5—Ashley Hudson; 6—David Young; 7—Flash Flanagan; 8—Shane Eden; 9—Air Paris; 10—Frenchy Riviera.

OHIO VALLEY CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING: Champion—Damaja; 1—Rico Constantino; 2—Flash Flanagan; 3—Rob Conway; 4—Doug Basham; 5—Jebediah Blackhawk; 6—Trailer Park Trash; 7—Stefan Gamlin; 8—Johnny Spade; 9—Rasputin; 10—Vito Andretti.

PENNSYLVANIA CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING: Champion—Glen Osbourne; 1—Flash Flanagan; 2—Michael Modest; 3—Jason Lee; 4—Jimi V; 5—Reckless Youth; 6—Mr. Ooh La La; 7—Chris Krueger; 8—Cheetah Master; 9—Ty Street; 10—Vincent Goodnight.

SOUTHERN CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING: Champion—Bo Dup ; 1—Major DeBeers; 2—Uncle Tom Kettle; 3—Scab; 4—Toad; 5—Puck Dup; 6—Frank Parker; 7—Boris Dragoff; 8—Big Slam; 9—Chilly Willy; 10—Juice.

WARRIORS OF WRESTLING FEDERATION: Champion—Doug Gilbert; 1—Blade Boudreaux; 2—Tim White; 3—Randy Rocket; 4—N.B.N.; 5—Jimmy Valiant; 6—Ricky Murdock; 7—Pokerface; 8—Moondog Rover; 9—Mr. Showtime; 10—Franklin Ray.

NEW JAPAN

IWGP Champion:
KEIJI MUTO
(C) 245, Yamanashi, Japan

1—MANABU NAKANISHI
(1) 235, Tokyo, Japan
2—KENSUKE SASAKI
(8) 233, Tokyo, Japan
3—YUJI NAGATA
(3) 220, Tokyo, Japan
4—SHINYA HASHIMOTO
(2) 287, Gifu, Japan
5—MASA CHONO
(4) 235, Tokyo, Japan
6—GENICHIRO TENRYU
(-) 235, Fukui, Japan
7—TATSUMI FUJINAMI
(-) 234, Oita, Japan
8—HIROYOSHI TENZAN
(5) 270, Tokyo, Japan
9—SATOSHI KOJIMA
(-) 223, Tokyo, Japan
10—SHIRO KOSHINAKA
(6) 225, Tokyo, Japan

ALL-JAPAN

Triple Crown Champion:
MITSUHARU MISAWA
(C) 228, Ashikaga, Japan

1—VADER
(1) 450, Denver, CO
2—KENTA KOBASHI
(3) 261, Fukuchiyama, Japan
3—JUN AKIYAMA
(5) 230, Hiroshima, Japan
4—AKIRA TAUE
(4) 265, Chichibu, Japan
5—THE GLADIATOR
(-) 277, Tampa, FL
6—HIROSHI HASE
(10) 225, Kanazawa, Japan
7—TAKAO OMORI
(8) 221, Tokyo, Japan
8—YOSHIHIRO TAKAYAMA
(6) 270, Sapporo, Japan
9—YOSHINARI OGAWA
(7) 202, Tokyo, Japan
10—MIKE BURTON
(9) 256, Austin, TX

EMLL

EMLL Champion:
RAYO DE JALISCO JR.
(C) 270, Guadalajara, Mexico

1—MR. NIEBLA
(-) 185, Cualtitlan, Mexico
2—ATLANTIS
(2) 180, Guadalajara, Mexico
3—VILLANO III
(3) 220, Mexico City, Mexico
4—ZUMBIDO
(-) 210, Acapulco, Mexico
5—EL HIJO DEL SANTO
(1) 180, Tulancingo, Mexico
6—UNIVERSO DOS MIL
(-) 240, Mexico City, Mexico
7—CIEN CARAS
(-) 235, Lagos de Moreno, Mexico
8—FUERZA GUERRERA
(6) 180, Mexico City, Mexico
9—DR. WAGNER JR.
(-) 215, Mexico City, Mexico
10—APOLO DANTES
(-) 215, Guadalajara, Mexico

AAA

AAA Champion:
PERRO AGUAYO
(C) 220, Zacatecas, Mexico

1—CIBERNETICO
(-) 235, Mexico City, Mexico
2—LATIN LOVER
(3) 190, Monterrey, Mexico
3—PERRO AGUAYO JR.
(4) 165, Zacatecas, Mexico
4—PENTAGON
(7) 175, Pachuca, Mexico
5—HEAVY METAL
(6) 180, Mexico City, Mexico
6—OCTAGON
(-) 180, Monterrey, Mexico
7—JERRY ESTRADA
(1) 239, Montclova, Mexico
8—MASCARA SAGRADA JR.
(10) 185, Veracruz, Mexico
9—CHARLY MANSON
(8) 221, Mexico City, Mexico
10—FELINO
(5) 165, Mexico City, Mexico

RATINGS ANALYSIS

Every month, this column will tell fans how we go about rating over 200 wrestlers in 22 different categories. It is a behind-the-scenes look at the most important–and respected–ratings system in the sport. This column is vital reading for all wrestling fans.

No chance ... no chance in hell. It was the biggest and most shocking story of the year ... of the decade ... maybe in wrestling history. **Vince McMahon**, the owner of the WWF and arguably the most successful promoter of all-time, won the WWF World heavyweight title. He, of course, defeated **Hunter Hearst Helmsley** to capture the championship at the September 14 *Smackdown* taping. We didn't need to see him in the ring against "Triple-H" to figure out Vinnie Mac was one tough guy, but *WWF champ* Vinnie Mac? Never thought we'd see that.

Vince McMahon

While his victory over "Triple-H" made for compelling TV and a great story, Vince has no intention of becoming a full-time competitor. And it's not like he beat Hunter cleanly for the belt. Had **"Stone-Cold" Steve Austin** not lent him a hand, he would not have won the title. So does Vinnie Mac get a spot in the overall Top 10? Honestly, although this month's ratings were compiled right after he won the strap, we didn't seriously consider giving him a spot.

Though we weren't happy about the way in which **Sting** captured the WCW World title from **Hulk Hogan** at Fall Brawl, he did have a very good month leading up to that pay-per-view. "Triple-H" gets the second spot because if you take away the loss to McMahon, he had a good month as well. Whether you like him and his attitude or not, you have to admit he was a very active champion during his first reign. He defended against **The Rock**, **Mankind**, **Kane**, and several others.

And the tag team situation? We're not sure what to make of the state of tag team wrestling these days. Certainly the era in which duos such as **The Road Warriors**, **Rick** and **Scott Steiner**, **The Fabulous Ones**, **The Midnight Express**, and **The Rock 'n' Roll Express** dominated the sport for years at a time is over. It's hard to find superstar wrestlers who are willing to sacrifice the chance at individual glory for the good of a team over the long haul.

However, on one hand, we could argue that tag team wrestling is pretty strong considering we had so many dangerous teams from which to choose when compiling the tag team rankings this month.

On the other hand, how strong can it be if so many of the teams holding the major titles are not duos that haven't been together long and don't figure to be together much longer? We couldn't very well rank **"Big Show" Paul Wight** and **The Undertaker** in the top spot, could we? So what if they've already won two WWF tag titles? They don't defend their belts very often, and the way in which they won them for a second time was ridiculous. They beat **The Rock** and **Mankind** in a "buried alive" match in which "Triple-H" actually shoveled dirt on top of Mankind for the win. Wight had been knocked unconscious, and while Helmsley was finishing off Mankind, 'Taker was involved in a backstage brawl. They were fortunate to get the number-three spot.

Tommy Dreamer

Then we get to the ECW World tag team champions, arch-rivals **Tommy Dreamer** and **Raven**. This is one strange story. They won the belts from **Buh Buh Ray** and **D-Von Dudley** in a confusing impromptu match on the night Raven made a surprise return to ECW (August 26 in Queens, New York). These two men still hate each other, but they were still champs as of press time. Since they had made a few successful defenses, we ranked them at number two.

We ultimately settled on **Harlem Heat** for the top spot because they've been very hot of late. They won the WCW World tag title in their first match after reuniting, and despite losing the belts nine days later, they strung together a few more wins, then dominated and beat **Barry** and **Kendall Windham** to regain the straps at Fall Brawl. Of course, considering the problems brothers **Booker T** and **Stevie Ray** had in the past, would it surprise anyone if they split up again?

That's all for this month! As usual, if you have any questions or comments, please feel free to drop us a line. Write to: "Ratings Analysis," c/o PRO WRESTLING ILLUSTRATED, Fort Washington, PA 19034. □

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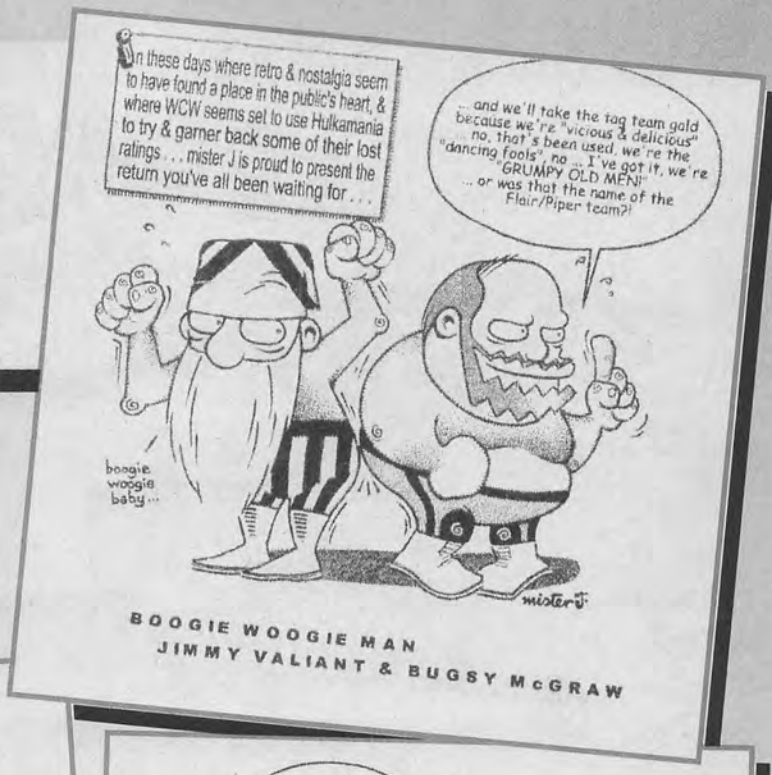
drawing BLOOD

By Jason Conlan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. . and we'll take the tag team gold because we're "vicious & delicious" no, that's been used, we're the "dancing fools" no . . I've got it, we're "GRUMPY OLD MEN!" . . or was that the name of the Flair/Piper team?!
boogie woogie baby . . .
mister J.

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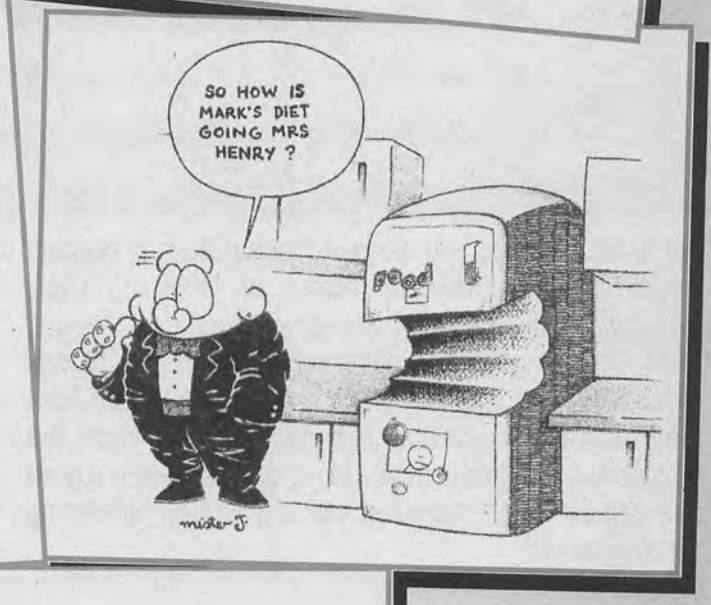

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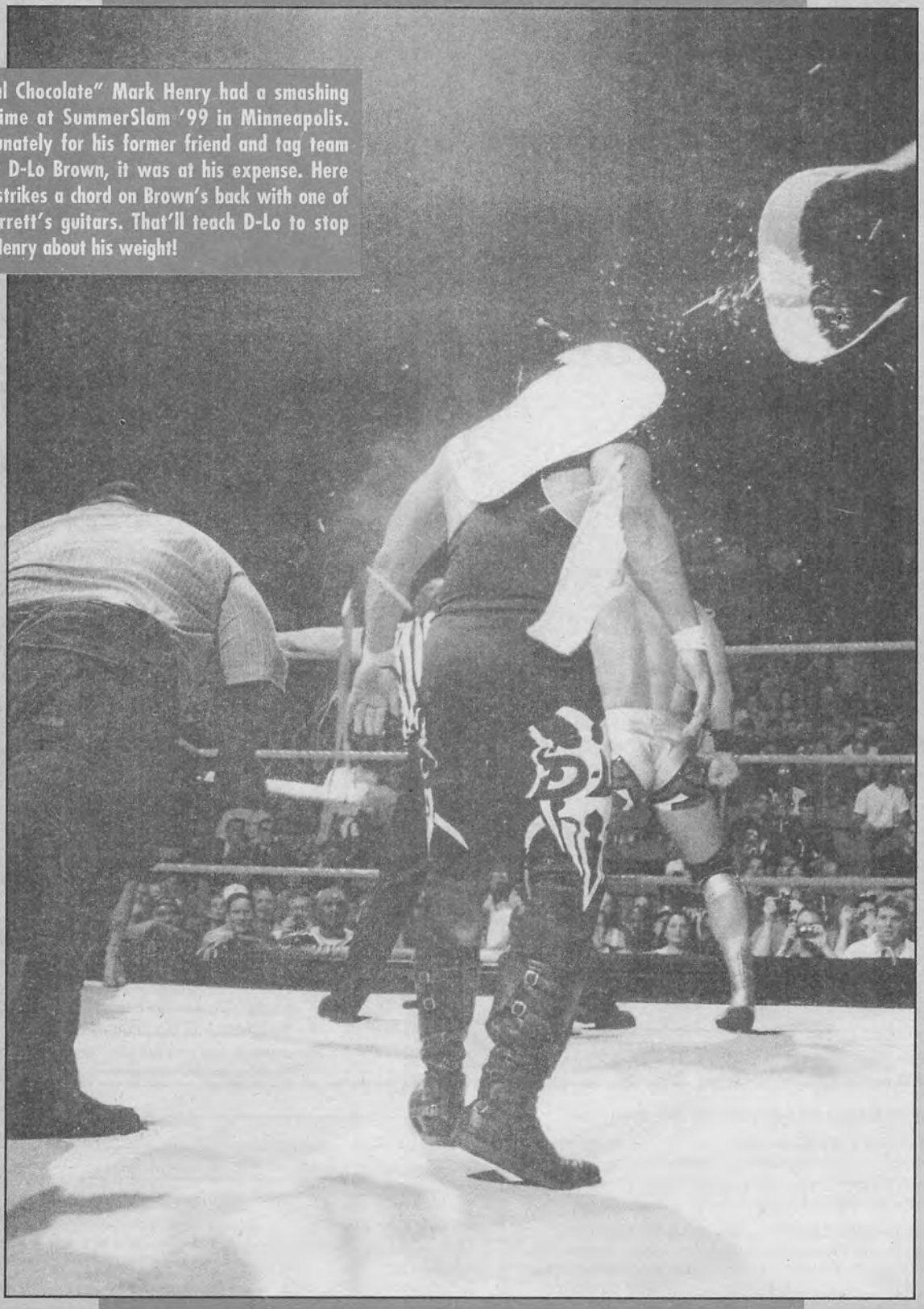
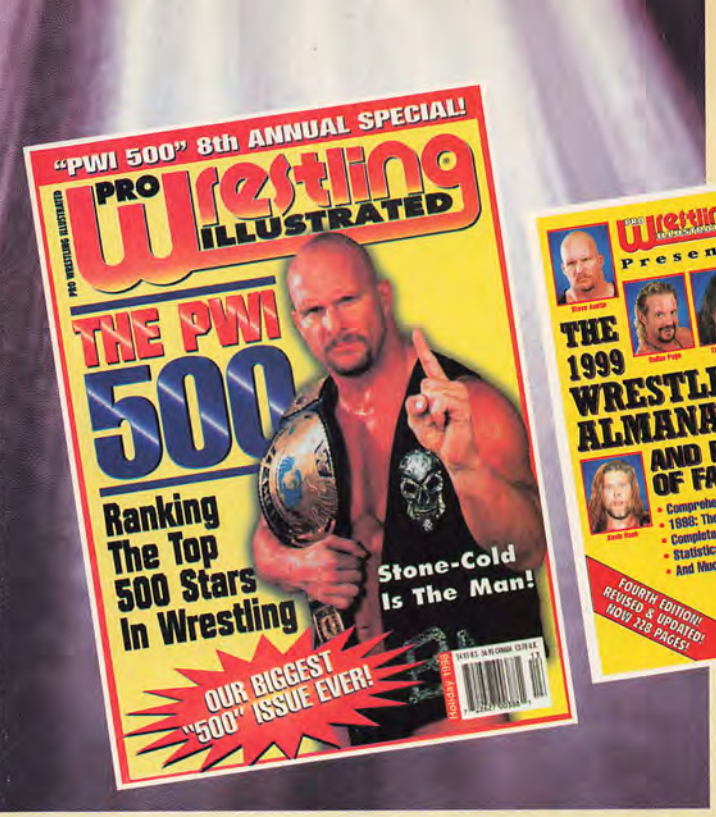


"Sexual Chocolate" Mark Henry had a smashing good time at SummerSlam '99 in Minneapolis. Unfortunately for his former friend and tag team partner D-Lo Brown, it was at his expense. Here Henry strikes a chord on Brown's back with one of Jeff Jarrett's guitars. That'll teach D-Lo to stop riding Henry about his weight!

Photo by Steve Beyer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